

RAPHAEL ALBUQUERQUE DE BOER

**WHO IS GOING TO SAVE THE FINAL GIRL? THE
POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE FILMS
HALLOWEEN AND *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS***

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Representation in the Films *Halloween* and *The Silence of the Lambs***

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ABSTRACT

Who is Going to Save the Final Girl? The Politics of Representation in the films *Halloween* and *The Silence of the Lambs*

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UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

2014

Supervising Professor: Dr. José Gatti

This dissertation aims at analyzing female representations in two film productions of the North American horror cinema, specifically of its subgenre slasher films, namely *Halloween*, directed by John Carpenter (1978) and *The Silence of the Lambs*, directed by Jonathan Demme (1991). My main theoretical framework is film, representation, gender, feminist and queer theories (Butler, 1990, 1993; Clover, 1989; Dika, 1985, Halberstam, 1995; Hall 1973, 1997; Mulvey, 1975, 1981; 2006; Rockoff, 2006; Weedon, 1995). My hypothesis is that the figure of the *final girl*, in the two films selected for analysis, is not progressive as suggested by the author Carol Clover in her work *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989). On the contrary, the two female characters are represented, in the narrative, as subjugated by the patriarchal system that has been conventionalized in the slasher subgenre. In order to provide arguments for my hypothesis, I analyze general aspects of both form and content of the two films, as well as specific scenes, using the cinematic elements of mise-en-scène, props, characterization, editing and lighting in order to obtain relevant results for my research.

Key-words: Representation, slasher films, final girl, gender

RESUMO

Who is Going to Save the Final Girl? The Politics of Representation in the films Halloween and The Silence of the Lambs

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Esta tese de doutorado objetiva analisar as representações femininas em duas produções cinematográficas do cinema de horror Norte-americano, especificamente do seu subgênero *slasher films*, intituladas *Halloween*, dirigido por John Carpenter (1978) e *The Silence of the Lambs*, dirigido por Jonathan Demme (1991). Para tal análise, eu utilizo como referencial teórico as teorias de estudos de cinema, representação, gênero, feministas e queer (Butler, 1990, 1993; Clover, 1989; Dika, 1985; Halberstam, 1995; Hall, 1973, 1997; Halberstam, 1995; Mulvey, 1975; 1981; 2006; Rockoff, 2006; Weedon, 1995) para compor os meus argumentos. A minha hipótese consiste no fato de que a figura da *final girl* não é inovadora como sugere a autora Carol Clover em sua obra *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989). Ao contrário, a personagem feminina é representada na narrativa como subjugada pelo sistema patriarcal que se convencionou em filmes do gênero. Para a investigação da minha hipótese, foram feitas análises gerais dos filmes propostos, tanto considerando suas formas quanto conteúdos, bem como a de cenas específicas, utilizando-se dos elementos de cinema tais como *mise-èn-scene*, elementos de cena, caracterização de personagens, edição e luz a fim de obter resultados relevantes para a minha pesquisa.

Palavras-chave: Representação, *slasher films*, *final girl*, gênero

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OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. **Chapter I** opens with a personal account of my experience as a viewer of horror movies (more specifically the slasher subgenre) and it introduces the main problem I aim at investigating. It presents my main objectives, significance of the research, research questions and method. Finally, I overview some of the authors that are part of the theoretical foundation of my dissertation (Butler 1990, 1993; Clover 1989; Hall 1997; Halberstam, 1995; Mulvey 1973, 1981, 2006; Weedon, 1999)

Chapter II, “Representation and the Slasher film”, outlines the concepts of representation (Hall, 1973, 1997), slasher films (Dika, 1985, Clover 1989, Rockoff, 2006), the figure of the monster (Carroll, 1990, Freeland, 2009, Jeha, 2007), and the final girl (Dika, 1985, Clover, 1989,).

Chapter III, “Who is the Boogeyman: the Monster or the Viewer?”, reviews John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978) regarding its social/cultural and political aspects both of its production and reception. I also analyze the film linked to its cinematic elements of mise-en-scène, camera angles, props, editing, among others (Bazin, 1967, Bordwell, 1997, Eiseinstein, 1928, 1945) in order to investigate the associations between the figure of the monster and the female characters (mainly the one of the final girl). The issue of the slasher film and family values is also discussed in this chapter (Gil, 2002).

Chapter IV, “The Dangerous Triangle: Queer Bill, Cannibal Lecter and Final Starling”, discusses Jonathan Demme’s *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) centering on the triangle Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) and Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine) in order to investigate how this triad is configured to depict gender and queer representations throughout the narrative.

Chapter V, “Final Remarks”, presents a parallel between the two selected films for analysis considering their key aspects of film form, gender and queer representations. It also brings up the delimitations of my work as well as attempts for further research in the area of the horror genre (especially its subgenre slasher).

PROLOGUE

Personal Account of the Slasher Subgenre as a Viewer

This present section narrates my personal experience, as a viewer of the slasher subgenre in different moments of my life. It starts from telling about my teenage times as a vivid watcher of slasher films up to the moment I decided to investigate these movies, as objects of my doctoral dissertation, in light of feminist, gender, queer and film theory.

Setting 1: Parque São Pedro, a quiet and family suburb in a small city (Rio Grande) in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The middle 1980s. Several weekends at my friend's place.

Films: Slasher, especially the *Friday the 13th* franchise

Who: Two male pre-adolescents at the age of 11

I still remember those weekends I used to spend hours watching slasher films¹ (and enjoying them) which graphically showed innocent women (and men) being killed one by one, with no apparent reason, by a monstrous being. I was eleven years old and, my best (boy)² friend and I would call them the “warm” movies (the non-“real” horror). Warm in the sense they would make us feel comfortable and warm in our seats by watching the controlled horror on the screen, apart and protected from the hegemonic masculinity (the actual “horror”) which terrified/harassed us for not being part of the pre established male gender we were socially/culturally expected to belong to.

Ironically, by saying that my female friends refused to watch the horror on the screen, I am directly recalling Linda Williams's influential article “When the Woman Looks” (1983). In her text, Williams revisits Laura Mulvey's brilliant “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) to position woman's look in horror films. For Williams, women have no pleasure from watching other women being ripped apart on the screen. The author argues that “there are excellent

¹ The concept of slasher films is thoroughly discussed in the following chapter of this work.

² My (girl) friends usually refused to watch slasher films.

reasons for this refusal of the woman to look, not the least of which is that she is often asked to bear witness to her own powerlessness in the face of rape, mutilation, and murder” (15). Obviously, both Mulvey’s and William’s works date to over thirty years of history in film studies and much has been post theorized since they have been published. However, the echoes produced by these two articles still permeate contemporary feminist film theory (Creed, 1993³) on the complex system of looking at/being looked at in films (including the breed I select for my analysis: the slasher film)

Hence, I experienced with my peers two situations: a) two boys (my boyfriend and I) who loved and cheered for the monster to kill innocent girls in horror movies; b) female friends who were disgusted and terrified by the cinematic experience from watching women in peril. Evidently, the scenario I present here is far too broad as it encompasses a minor group of “social participants” to my research⁴, though it clearly connects to my present interest of research for this doctoral dissertation.

Setting 2: London, 2010, Birkbeck College of Media and Visual Arts

³The works of Creed is commented on the next section of this work.

⁴ Carol Clover in *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989) tells that she has visited some local video stores in California in order to conduct anthropological research about whether the predominance of horror movies’ renters were male or female. By doing that, Clover attempted to reiterate her hypothesis that horror movies are predominantly male-oriented, and that females usually reject watching films of the genre, except when they are accompanied by their male partners. Although showing relevance for the field of film reception by dealing with the issue of identification of the viewer with the narrative’s characters (which recalls Mulvey’s theory on the male gaze), Clover’s argument has been criticized since it limits her research to a few number of participants as well as it assumes a gender binarism which does not incorporate the variety of orientations the sexed subject might have. For example, the author states that most males entertain watching horror films, though it is not clear whether she perceives “males” only as heterosexual men or not. Likewise it is with females. She argues that the female viewer mostly reject viewing other women’s tortures on the screen. In other words, what seems to be missing in Clover’s hypothesis is a more in-depth analysis of gender/sex contextualization with both the viewer and the characters on the diegesis.

One of the first academic experiences I had regarding horror films took place two years ago while I had my initial encounter with Professor Laura Mulvey in order to attempt to be supervised by her during my future “doutorado sanduíche” in London. Having read most of her work many times, especially the two well-known essays “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975)” and “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1981)”, I thought I was prepared to be face-to-face with one of the most influential feminist film theorists whose work I had eagerly read.

Somehow, the interview turned out to be frustrating and thought-provoking at the same measure: when I was first asked by Mulvey about my plans as well as the object of studies, I enthusiastically replied I was working with horror films and that I would like to draw on her theory of the male gaze, predominantly explored in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. However, Mulvey’s immediate reply was “I hate horror films”. Because of her distaste for the genre she said she would not be the right person to work with me. Even though I was consumed by the feeling of frustration and disappointment, I left the interview particularly curious about Mulvey’s response. Having read William’s text⁵ before I had the interview, I started to wonder why Mulvey would “hate” (she highlighted the feeling) horror films. I certainly understand that viewers’ taste for film genres cannot be contested. However, the response had come from the theorist who used psychoanalysis as a “political weapon” to contest the patriarchal system of classic narratives which subjugated women to the place of objects of pleasure. Hence, I humbly inferred that Mulvey’s reaction to horror films would be possibly associated to William’s words regarding women’s denial to look (with pleasure) at other women being massacred in the private world of movie theatres. A year later, I ended up being admitted by professor Mulvey and I was supervised by her during my research on horror films. However, the doubt about her (hate) word toward the genre still persists on my mind.

Setting 3: London, 2012 at Prince Charles Cinema. *Friday the 13th* Film Marathon (the screening of six *Friday the 13th* films, from 6:30pm- 1:30am)

⁵“When the Woman Looks” (1983)

Having spent part of my adolescence watching horror films, and eventually deciding to work with these movies as the object of a doctoral dissertation, made me realize that I needed to have a more practical experience with the genre, as a viewer, during the period of my academic life. Surprisingly, during a class break, by looking at the movie listings on the newspaper, I found a *Friday the 13th* movie marathon at the most popular movie theater in London, which mostly shows old movies: The Prince Charles Cinema. I was extremely thrilled by the experience of watching for the first time my favorite teenage films on the big screen as well as having the chance to analyze how the audience (including myself) of these movies would be like in the 2010s. Unexpectedly, the majority of the film public seemed to be male (was Carol Clover right? I supposed). I counted 145 out of 200 viewers, being the women most accompanying their male (boy) friends. Nevertheless, conversely to what Williams points out, “little girls and grown women [did not]⁶ cover[ed]⁷ their eyes or hide behind the shoulders of their [heterosexual]⁸ dates”. (15). They, however (men and women, despite their sexual orientation), quoted along some of the most famous lines of the *Friday the 13th* films, especially the one which includes Jason⁹’s mother speech by saying “Kill her mom, kill her”.¹⁰ Moreover, the bloodbath scenes which seemed to mostly terrify the audiences during my teenage times (the middle 1980s), now seemed to produce laughter on the viewers¹¹. *Friday the 13th* became, in that socio-cultural moment in London (and almost certainly not only there), a campy cult movie.

⁶My addition.

⁷My addition.

⁸My addition.

⁹Jason Voorhees is the iconic character of the *Friday the 13th* franchise. He is the monster who kills people during all *Friday the 13th* films, except for the first one.

¹⁰This particular scene shows the moment the final girl Alice (Adrienne King) is ruthlessly chased by Jason’s mother (the killer). Mrs. Voorhees “hears” her son’s voice that demands her to kill the lone survivor Alice.

¹¹Linda Williams, in her article “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess”, theorizes about three main film genres namely porn, weepie and horror films. For her, these three genres due to their feature of “excess” produce body sensations in the spectator who “imitates” the cinematic events through their bodies. Horror films might then eventually produce a “real”

sensation of fear by making the audience scream; close their eyes and even faint. An example of that is a girl who vomited and collapsed in the screening of William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) — mentioned the movie's leading actress Ellen Burstyn, during an interview to promote the film. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWIZrZpOf5M>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The woman: My mind is playing tricks on me, Moira
I am literally seeing things

And everybody thinks I am crazy

Moira: That's what men do. They make you think you are
crazy. So they can have their fun

Have you ever read "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte
Perkins Gilman?

Her husband, a doctor, locks her away in the upstairs bedroom
to recuperate from a slightly hysterical tendency. Staring at the wall
paper day after day she begins to hallucinate that there are women
trapped in the pattern. Half-mad she scrapes off the wallpaper to set the
women free. When her husband finally unlocks the door he finds her
circling the room touching the wall paper whispering: "I finally got out
of here".

Since of the beginning of time, men find excuses to lock women
away. They make up diseases, like hysteria. Do you know where that
word comes from? The Greek word for uterus. In the second century
they thought it was caused by sexual deprivation...
... and the only possible cure was hysterical
paroxysm...orgasms. Doctors would masturbate women in their offices
and called it medicine. It was a hundred of years and we're no better off
today. Men are still inventing ways to drive women over the edge.

*(American Horror Story "The Rubber Man"- Season 1 episode
8, 2011)*

Having explored my personal experience within the context of
theory, I would like, in this section, to extend the foundational
theoretical concepts in order to illuminate my arguments. I initially
bring up some of the feminist ideas of the theorist Chris Weedon in her
article "Psychoanalysis and Difference" (1999). In her work, Weedon
reflects on the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan to discuss the
categories of gender and sexual difference, mainly focusing on the
position women occupy in the psychoanalytic and social construction of
their subjectivities. Relating to terms such as the phallus, castration

complex, the pre-oedipal and oedipal phases, Weedon expands the discussion presented by the two aforementioned psychoanalysts linked to the works of the Post-Lacanian feminists Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, which present counterpoints for the so-called misogynist readings of both Freud and Lacan, both psychoanalysts who defined women by their “lack” in relation to men.

On the one hand, for Weedon, Freud grounded his work in anatomical studies. She believes that the pivotal element of his theories on the differences between men and women were centered on the genital organs, namely on the distinction he does on the male and female ones, attributing women’s “inferior” position dogged by the lack of the penis as “a key factor determining their intellectual and moral differences from men” (78). Freud defined it as “the penis-envy”. However, Weedon acknowledges the social aspect of Freud’s thoughts on the categories of gender and sex when she points out he was “a man of his time” so as to justify his presumably misogynist position towards women’s subjectivity. Such ideas on the categories of sex/gender/sexuality were later developed in dialogue with Judith Butler’s influential works *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993).

On the other hand, Weedon’s comments on Lacan’s ideas relate his work to the fundamental argument that women and men are mainly constituted in language, and that language is essentially male. The symbolic order is patriarchal; assured by the power of possessing the phallus (a primary signifier attributed to men, either symbolically meaning the male genital or a position of power over women), in contrast to women who lack the phallus (the Other/the castrated), therefore the one who is marked in language¹². Weedon argues that “the primacy of the phallus as the signifier of difference means that for women, subjectivity is a masculine-defined subjectivity. Western

¹²Elaine Showalter in her book *Speaking of Gender* (1989) comments on the position of women as the one marked in language. For her, “every language gender is a grammatical category, and the masculine is the linguistic norm. Even in English, a language in which only nouns referring to human beings and animals are formally gendered (in contrast to languages such as French and German in which all nouns, including inanimate objects, places, and concepts have gender as well), the masculine form is generic, universal, or unmarked, while the feminine form is marked by one suffix or other variant. We can call either Sylvia Plath or Robert Lowell a poet, but we cannot call Lowell a “poetess” except as an insult (1)

thought is thus both logocentric, privileging the word, and phallogocentric, privileging the phallus.” (82)

Based on the ideas I briefly presented about the psychoanalytical work of Freud and Lacan, associated to Weedon’s interpretation of their arguments, I develop my own questions as follows: Why would my friend and I, both being men (gender /male; sex/masculine), lack power in the mechanism operated by the symbolic order of the phallus? Nevertheless, we would function as the Other/the castrated in the dyad and, therefore being the signifiers of a female gendered subjectivity, one which led us to constant coercion and harassment. For young boys at that age, the male gender pattern was (and still is, not only for youngsters) defined by hegemonic social/cultural patterns of behavior: to have, while students, active status in Physical Education classes; and thus to succeed in the so-called predominantly “male” sports such as soccer and basketball, just to name a few; date girls (or at least to have sex drive for women) and preferably not to express their emotions because “boys don’t cry”¹³. All the aforementioned criteria seem to stand for common sense thought which sadly still operates in homophobic/hate discourse in hegemonic media and daily discursive and social practices.

Nevertheless, the critic Judith Butler, in her groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble* (1990) criticizes the supremacy of the phallus in language/social practices, and, thus, illuminates, at least in theory, the issues I previously raised. She believes that “compulsory heterosexuality and phallogocentrism are understood as regimes of power/discourse which often divergent ways of answering central questions of gender discourse” (Preface, ix). For the author, the categories of gender/sex/sexuality are fluid and their discontinuation destabilizes our subjectivity (“I”). Thus, I shall bring up into discussion the following questions: How is our subjectivity constructed? How do we perceive our /gender/sexual roles in society and culture? Which gendered “position” should we occupy to reverse the norm of the “phallus”? Nonetheless, by raising such questions, do not we run the risk of constructing ideas which lead to a biological binary representation of our gender and sex subjectivities as I previously contested in psychoanalytical foundation?

¹³This expression might also refer to the film *Boys don’t Cry* (1999) which is based on the true story of Teena Brandon who was female born, yet she perceived her subjectivity as male. When she falls in love for a girl and engages in a romantic love affair with her, a group of homophobic men brutally rape and eventually assassinate her.

Butler's hypothesis though elucidates my questioning on gender subjectivity when she writes that

If gender is the cultural meaning the sexed bodies assume then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies (7)

The author's ideas on the instability of the three aforementioned categories are key to the development of my own argumentation throughout this dissertation, especially as to contest the symbolic order of the phallus as well as the presumably patriarchal Freudian and Lacanian theory on sexual differences. Butler claims that gender and sex are unstable categories. For the author, the division of gender and sex has its origins based on the fact that sex is stable and biological while gender is a social/cultural construction. However, the author contests the fixity of sex and gender as she develops arguments that transgress the boundaries of the categories gender, sex and desire.

Regarding Butler's arguments on the instability of the aforementioned categories of gender, sex and sexuality I move to draw some conclusions based on my personal reports. Paradoxically, my friend and I, both sensitive and young boys who were constantly bullied by the other (male) classmates, never entirely had identified, as spectators, with the female gender which, in slasher films, is depicted as women at stake and eventually have their bodies mutilated in the diegesis. What seemed to be a direct via of identification between two "minorities" did not come to materialize. On the contrary, the grotesque male killer, half monster half human, looked exceptionally more appealing than the fragile girls (in the essentialist perspective that frames women as sensitive, fragile, just to name a few qualities) who were not fully able to defeat their aggressor.

Unfortunately, my friend and I were perpetuating the pattern of gender domination (even though we curiously did not directly fulfill the expectations of the "male" gender¹⁴) between the mechanism

¹⁴By saying that I do not agree with the idea that there is a single and direct link between the categories of gender, sex and sexuality. On the contrary, I perceive them as unstable and subjected to constant change and flexibility. Such ideas seem to be conversely adopted by segregative praxis such as the

spectator/narrative. We, as in the sadistic position of voyeurs, mainly identified with the monster, but never with the girl; coming to the excess of transcending the screen/viewer apparatus: we used to impersonate, and record, with our hand cameras, an event, in which the aggressors (we, the boys), in a “real” life pre-adolescent game, “attacked” our female peers. That gave us power, the “power” of the phallus that lacked us while inserted in our oppressive school social scenario. It is worth-commenting that our social practices were part of an unconscious venture reproducing the monster/killer power over the objectified female body on the screen. In order to illustrate my previous argumentation, I quote the film theorist Carol Clover who believes that

just as attacker and attacked are expressions of the same self in nightmares, so they are expressions of the same viewer in horror film. Our primary and acknowledged identification may be with the victim, the adumbration of our infantile fears and desires, our memory sense of ourselves as tiny and vulnerable in the face of the enormous Other; but the Other is also finally another part of ourself, the projection of our repressed infantile rage and desire (our blind drive to annihilate those toward whom we feel anger, to force satisfaction from those who stimulate us, to wrench food for ourselves if only by actually devouring those who feed us) that we have had in the name of civilization to repudiate. We are both Red Riding Hood and the Wolf; the force of the experience, the horror, comes from “knowing” both sides of the story- from giving ourselves over to the cinematic play of pronoun functions (155)

patriarchal, homophobic and racist discourse which unfortunately still operates in society (and it is largely propagated by hegemonic media).

However, the riveting (and conscious) aspect, we noticed, of such slasher films, was the immutable pattern of having a girl, yet never a man who endures until the end of the narrative. Equally curious, the sex scenes and the eventual slaughter of the heterosexual couples, during or after sexual intercourse, was also another worth-mentioning feature.

Regrettably, I had not acknowledged a relevant problem in such horror movies: that of women's exploitation. Female bodies were at service to be looked at by the most part of male spectators (including my friend and myself) who had pleasure in doing so. At the time I watched the aforementioned movie genre (middle 1980s) all of my perceptions and sensations had already been/were being discussed and theorized by many scholars and, ironically, became the object of this study. For instance, film critics from the early 1970s contested the predominant structuralist approach which posits representation of women in art as merely positive or negative prevailing content; thus not taking into account the psychoanalytic and semiologic processes which configure such representations insofar as the meaning these films produce.

A variety of scholars (ranging from psychoanalysts to semioticians, namely Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Theresa de Lauretis, among others) "noted the lack of awareness about the way images are constructed through the mechanism of whatever artistic practice is involved; representations, they pointed out, are mediations, embedded through the art form in the dominant ideology" (Kaplan 119). Thus, now I understand that the pleasure (and I regret) I had by looking at women's bodies being torn apart is part of complex psychoanalytic, cultural, social and political processes that position women as less than men. The lack of the phallus I sensed for belonging to a "subversive" gender order had been fraudulent. My friend and I had undeniably an "active" sadistic status in the psychoanalytic mechanism that oppresses women on the screen.

1.1 Statement of the Problems and Goals

Having explored, in the previous section, my subjectivity as an illustration of how psychoanalytical mechanisms operate in the mind of the viewer, I shall move to state the main problem and goals of this doctoral dissertation.

The main problem I aim at investigating in this study is representation of women and how their associations within the diegesis in two horror films, namely *Halloween* (1978), and *The Silence of the*

Lambs (1991), are configured in order to convey gendered characterizations of a character which has repeatedly been featured in slasher films over the past decades: the final girl, that is, the last survivor of a massacre. My initial hypothesis is that the final girls I analyze in this doctoral dissertation are not necessarily progressive as the film feminist theorist Carol Clover suggests in her work *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989). I argue instead that the female characters in question personify the “lack” once assumed by Freudian and Lacanian theory. Although not being the main corpora of my investigation, alternative filmography¹⁵ and other film genres are cited so as to enrich my discussion. Additionally, I investigate the implications of the term *male gaze* since its theoretical foundation in feminist film criticism (Mulvey, 1975) in comparison to insofar as it has been operating in the eyes of the spectator in more recent filmic productions (for instance, *The Silence of the Lambs*). To illuminate my arguments I work with the psychoanalytical concepts of castration, oedipal complex and the phallus (Freud, 1915, Lacan, 1955); poststructural concepts of representation, gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990, 1993, Hall, 1973, 1997); feminist film theory (Mulvey 1975, 1981, 2006, Clover, 1989); and queer theory (Halberstam, 1995), among others.

Regarding the issue of politics and its significance in the “real” world, the horror films I selected for analysis have called much attention from media and film criticism as they bring up questions about excess and gender. *Halloween*, due to its excess, in its connotative use, of massive violence and exploitation of the female body, yet *The Silence of the Lambs* for its issues on gender, sexuality and queer representation. *Halloween*, a splatter¹⁶/slasher film, makes explicit use of blood and

¹⁵Even though I do not dedicate an entire chapter on the successors slasher films of *Halloween* namely *Friday the 13th part I* (1980) and *II* (1983), I comment on some of their key elements due to their importance for the investigation of women’s portrayal in the slasher breed. The so-called oedipal relationship between Jason and his mother resembles other films of the genre such as *Psycho* (1960) and *Halloween* (here, on the relationship with his sisters). Moreover, the similarities between *Friday the 13th* and *Halloween* are remarkable, mainly in the figures of the monsters/killers and the final girls.

¹⁶Splatter was a term initially referred for the horror subgenre (slasher) which depicted teenagers in peril being stalked by a male aggressor. (Dika, 1985).

violence in order to lure people, but not equally in *The Silence of the Lambs*, that conveys excess in a non-explicit manner. However, if it is analyzed more carefully *The Silence of the Lambs* portrays some analogous features depicted in *Halloween*, such as the characterization of the final girl as well as the intrinsic relationship between the male killer and the two women in peril: Laurie Strode, from *Halloween*, and Clarice Starling, from *The Silence of the Lambs*.

The figure of the final girl, initially developed by Carol Clover in her book *Men, Women and Chainsaws* revolves about the puritan female figure who, after having all of her friends brutally murdered by a "man" (I use quotation marks to highlight the idea that the killer does not entirely meet the human's features as "he" is half man/half monster) survives after an extensive struggle with her aggressor. The mark of puritanism as well as the dichotomy of good and bad is worth-commenting in the sense they are bind to the construction of the androgynous final girl. Carol Clover labels the girl androgynous due to her transformation from having extremely puritan feminine characteristics such as deprived of sex and vices in contrast to her personification in the end of the narrative as aggressive, wild, and chiefly making use of phallic objects (long knives, machetes, axes, among others).

Hence, such appropriation of long, sharp weapons would represent the phallus, the power that "lacks" in women, and therefore once women make use of them, they symbolically stand for women's progressiveness, which entails another problem: women, in order to "progress", would have to acquire a phallus. For Clover, the figure of the phallic woman is central in slasher films. A remarkable example of this argument is Jason's mother in the film *Friday the 13th part I*. She is the iconification of a fierce male in the body of a woman, a fact which I consider problematic since the female monster only becomes powerful because of her personification of the male gender. It is visibly portrayed in the narrative since her phallic characterization is built by her short hair, long boots and her capacity to defeat any man or woman who crosses her path. She is the androgynous (fe) male monster, which later loses power to the final girl (Jason's mother is decapitated with an extremely long machete by the final girl in the end of the narrative). The term androgynous echoes in the unstable categories of gender, sex and sexuality. If the main female character is in an androgynous positionality, will not the spectator also occupy this space of androgyny? Carol Clover confirms it. For her, the spectator has gender fluidity, which would allow for that to happen.

However, for James Marriot, in his book *Horror Films* (2004), “gender issues in slasher films are more complicated than is suggested by the simple accusations of misogyny they often attract” (214). However, what does Marriot mean by “simple accusation of misogyny [horror films] often attract”? It has been overtly theorized by film critics and theorists that gender in horror films has a complex social and psychological impact on the audience. Nevertheless, what Marriot implies is that there is a point beyond rather than simply contesting the formulaic portrayal of women in the horror genre. It is this “hidden object” that interests me in this dissertation.

One of the selected films for my analysis which deals with rather complex gender issues is precisely John Carpenter's *Halloween*. It tells the story of the psychopath Michael Myers, after he escapes from the mental institution he has lived, for having stabbed to death his eldest sister. In his psychiatrist's words, he is “The impersonated devil”. The diegesis takes place in Haddonfield, USA, where the mad Myers spends the entire film looking for Laurie Strode, whom we will learn in *Halloween's* sequel (1981) to be his youngest sister. In *Halloween* (1978), Michael Myers chases and kills some of Laurie's friends while she is babysitting a young boy called Tommy. Laurie's behavior fits the stereotype I previously commented about the virginal girl who denies sexual or even romantic affairs to spend most of her time focused on being a “good” girl.

Moreover, another important aspect that deserves some attention is the one of *Halloween's* film poster. In the image (Figure 1) the pronoun HE is written in capital letters next to a phallic prop — a long and potent knife visibly connote the idea of the power of the phallus (as the signifier of the male organ) over innocent girls.¹⁷ Ironically, contrary to the phallic magnitude portrayed by the pronoun “he” in capital letters, used in the poster, it is a movie scene in which the psychiatrist doctor Loomis (Donald Pleasence) refers to Michael Myers (the killer/monster) reducing the pronoun “HE” to “it”. The doctor is on his way to the asylum in order to take Myers to a maximum security mental institution: “Don't underestimate it — says doctor to a nurse who thinks he is taking too much precautions regarding Michael Myers. She instantly replies: Don't you think we should refer to 'it' as 'him'?”

¹⁷ These ideas are thoroughly developed in the film analysis chapter.

The pronoun “it” is used to refer to objects, things and people whose sex is unknown. Dr Loomis’ discourse seems to be associated to his image of Michael as inhuman due to his evil nature: In Loomis’s words “He (it)¹⁸ is pure evil”. Monsters are not usually sexed creatures; they are, on the contrary, deprived of their sexual capabilities and often repressed.



Figure 1- The movie poster is appealing due to its sexual connotation represented by the murder’s long knife

Slasher films like *Halloween* were made to lure a certain kind of audience: teenagers. Richard Nowell, in “Where nothing is off limits: genre, commercial revitalization, and the teen slasher film posters of 1982-1984” (2011) states that

selling the films on images of imperiled females, while a poor reflection of their

¹⁸ My addition

content, permitted distributors to capitalize on high-profile critical discourse that had orbited teen slashers. Distributors of teen slashers aped Halloween's poster to evoke discourses of quality that had dominated Halloween's popular critical reception and to capitalize on apparent audience fondness for the film. Promoting teen slashers as indeterminate horror films, on the other hand, represented an attempt by distributors to distance the films from individual teen slashers and associated discourses by stressing one aspect of the films' generic heritage. (53).

Likewise the relevance of the film poster for the investigation of gender representation is the final confrontation between Laurie and Michael Myers. It is also remarkable in the sense she becomes absolutely terrified (Figure 2) after a ruthless battle with her aggressor, who chases her until his (its) supposed defeat. His make-believe death is what gives him, within the diegesis, the mark of half man/half monster as he is shot, by his psychiatrist, with more than ten gunshots including in the chest, stomach and head, but is not entirely subdued. Such mark of half man/half monster, though in different manners, is over repeated in many of slasher films, including *Halloween*, yet not in *The Silence of the Lambs* in which the two "monsters" (Hannibal and Buffalo Bill) do not seem to depict any mark of inhumanity, on the contrary, they are "real" killer/monsters.



Figure 2- Laurie (the final girl) is portrayed as hysterical after having fought with her monstrous aggressor Michael Myers

However, *The Silence of the Lambs* is believed¹⁹ to tell a different story. Clarice Starling is a student who trains to become a FBI agent. Being one of the finest students of the federal academy she is invited to work in the unsolved case of the serial killer nicknamed

¹⁹ The figure of the presumably final girl Clarice Starling, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, is likely to be linked to Laurie's progressive feature as suggested by Clover in *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989). However, if their portrayals are analyzed more carefully as implies Tony Williams in "Trying to Survive on the Darker Side" (1996) both Laurie and Clarice convey similar characteristics of female disempowerment.

Buffalo Bill²⁰. In order to have help for this case Clarice is told by her boss, the agent Jack Crawford (Scott Glenn), to have periodical meetings with Bill's former psychiatrist Hannibal 'The Cannibal': a man who used to literally eat his patients with "a good Chianti and fava beans"²¹. After some encounters, it is established a psychological game between Clarice and Hannibal that reveals her inner fragile characterization in contrast to her presumed tough and sensible behavior depicted in the beginning of the narrative. Nevertheless, what makes Clarice Starling closer to Laurie Strode is her mark as a final girl. Clarice's portrayal happens to be fragile and sensitive due to many distressing memories and harsh experiences of her tormented childhood she had after her father had died, or because of "the lambs which do not stop screaming", as Hannibal Lecter says to Clarice.

The Silence of the Lambs is not properly categorized as a slasher film²², like *Halloween*. However, what I attempt to investigate, is Clarice's representation in relation to the two brutal killers, Lecter and Bill, and how it is configured to convey her characterization according to how the author Carol Clover conceptualizes the trope of the final girl.

Regarding *Halloween*, which is the first film I analyze, the issues of virginity and gender play an important role for my investigation. The murdered characters of both sexes in most of slasher films seem to share the same characteristics: they are mostly teens who

²⁰ Even though not being a real case, the character of Buffalo Bill recalls the true story of the serial killer Ed Gein, a North-American farmer who killed his female victims in order to remove their skin. However, Ed Gein has not only inspired Buffalo Bill's character. Both films *Psycho* (1960) and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) also depict characters that have largely been associated to Gein's gruesome nature. Norman Bates is linked to Gein due to his morbid relationship with his mother. Both kept their mothers' corpses inside their houses, whereas Leatherface, likewise Bill and Gein, kill to make a mask made out of his victim's skin. (http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/notorious/gein/bill_1.html)

²¹ Lecter's words.

²² The concept of the slasher film has been extensively debated among critics, theorists and movie reviewers. However, a consensual classification is far from being obtained. This issue is further elaborated in the next chapter of this dissertation.

have sex, drink beer and, above all, they are not careful enough to acknowledge what is happening around them. This is therefore the moment the killer prepares the slaughtering. In relation to cinematic elements, one might say that the spectator in an almost synchronized vivacity seems to share excitement by following the eye of the camera, through point-of-view shots²³ (POV), and thus watching the events with the “eyes” of the killer/monster in the diegesis. Particularly in *Halloween*, though not in *The Silence of the Lambs*, several teenagers die while preparing to have/ having/ or after having had sexual intercourse.

In *Halloween*, the majority of the victims are women who have frequent sexual encounters and consequently die because of that. In one particular scene, the second of Myers’ victims is having sex with her boyfriend at home. After that, the boyfriend leaves to drink beer while the girl waits in bed. The phone rings and the girl answers but nobody speaks and, after a few minutes, the monster is ready to attack her. It is however remarkable to call attention to the role of editing in this scene as sex and violence seem to be combined to convey the puritan and dogmatic idea that sex is a sin, therefore if you have sex you will die. Yet, the fact of Laurie (the final girl) being sexually innocent and almost virginal does not stop Myers to chase her until the end of the film. For Marriot, “Laurie with less in her mind, notices Myers and is distinguished from her friends less by her virginity than her resourcefulness and quick-witted awareness of the threat” (Marriot, 215). In addition, another fact that is worth commenting is the relationship between Michael Myers and the members of his family²⁴. The young Myers kills his sister after she has sexual intercourse with her boyfriend and he returns to his hometown to chase his youngest sister Laurie (the final girl).

In other words, the two films, although exhibiting different plots, seem to portray similar associations between the main female characters and the male monsters/serial killer. In both *Halloween* and

²³The concept of the point-of-view camera is elaborated in the following chapters of my dissertation.

²⁴The issue of family and slasher films is debated in the chapters of filmic analysis in this dissertation.

The Silence of the Lambs, the two final girls, Laurie and Clarice are portrayed as virginal women who need to defeat a monster in the end of the narrative. However, the question that I pursue to investigate throughout this present work is: Does Carol Clover's concept of the final girl as progressive and the psychoanalytical method she adopts fit the characterization of the female characters selected for my research? It is through filmic analysis, in the following chapters, that I investigate and problematize the referred question I raise.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Because theory permeates all chapters of this dissertation, it is not my intention, in this section, to present an in-depth review the literature I shall utilize. To do so, I present an overview of some of the feminist ideas that have shaped the political agenda of criticism throughout the years.

Much has been said and written about the trajectory of the feminist movement and its contributions for women's rights. Now, in Kaplan's words, in her article "Global Feminisms and the State of Feminist Film Theory" (2004), "we talk about a globalized woman in contrast to the monolithic 'woman' who was really a white Western woman, its neglect of the specificity of minority and other marginalized women, its generally heterosexual and Eurocentric focus, and so on" (3). However, I find relevant, in this dissertation, to go back to the past to understand the present in order to finally attempt to raise relevant issues for further discussion in the future.

Let us now resume the passage I quoted in the beginning of this introductory chapter. The quote is from an episode of the HBO television series *American Horror Story* (2011) which, amongst a range of issues, tackles the one of feminism within the realm of horror. The passage presents a dialogue between two women: Moira (a ghost who inhabits a haunted house) and Vivien, a pregnant housewife²⁵ who

²⁵Ryan Murphy's *American Horror Story* (2011) is a well-succeeded horror TV series. It has won many Emmy Awards (including best leading role in a TV miniseries for the acclaimed actress Jessica Lange). Besides that, the miniseries often refers to horror classic movies. In this particular season, the housewife's character makes allusion to the iconic figure of Rosemary from Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1963) which tells the story of a woman who has been raped by the devil, and that eventually delivers its baby. Due to the fact her husband is part of a satanic ritual, Rosemary finds herself entrapped

claims to be mad. Moira relates the woman's unstable emotional state by recalling the literary work "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), a short story written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman that tells about a woman who is locked in her bedroom by her husband who believes she is hysterical. Likewise the female character in "The Yellow Wallpaper", the housewife in *American Horror Story* experiences a similar incident: she is also told by her husband, who is a psychiatrist, to be hysterical as she believes she sees ghosts around the house. Such scenario conveys, in both literary and filmic texts, the damages and the tortures (physical and psychological) women have been suffering throughout the years, even though they supposedly conquered their "liberation" during the middle of the last century. The term hysteria, for instance, was classified by common sense of medical discourse as "an innate disease of women of the 19th century" (Showalter, 25). For many feminist critics drawing on the works of Freud, Lacan and Julia Kristeva, it is "a symbolic response of the body" or a "women's language of the body" (Showalter, 288). Elaine Showalter, in contrast to Freud's psychosexual argument that hysteria "had a regular connection with the libidinal economics of sexual life" (Freud, 103), states that hysteria ought to be perceived through a gender perspective in order to contest the patriarchal and sexist language of science regarding this "mental illness". In Showalter's words,

When we look at hysteria through the lens of gender, new feminist questions begin to emerge. Instead of tracing the history of hysteria as a female disorder, produced by misogyny and changing views of femininity, we can begin to see the linked attitudes toward masculinity that influenced both diagnosis and the behavior of male physicians. Conversely, by applying feminist methods and insights to the symptoms, therapies, and texts of male hysteria, we can begin to understand that issues of gender and sexuality are

in a net of malign events leading her to psychological and physical pain. In *American Horror Story*, Vivien's character is also rapped by an evil creature and she is also part of a similar scenario like the one exposed in *Rosemary's Baby*.

as crucial to the history of male experience as they have been in shaping the history of women. (288).

The issue of hysteria is presented in a wide range of slasher films as the mental status of the final girl who, after being chased, wounded, tortured, eventually endures in the narrative, and is represented as hysterical. I examine in the filmic analysis section of this study to what extent the final girl Laurie from *Halloween* and at less extent Clarice, from *The Silence of the Lambs*, are portrayed in the films as “hysterical” due to their sexual deprivation. Thus, a feminist approach to such issue of hysteria is relevant in the following chapters I investigate the characterization of both final girls.

It is not new that women are daily exposed to a huge variety of stereotypes (like in the aforementioned case of hysteria) and often suffer physical damages to their bodies such as rape, domestic violence, genital mutilation, among other harms. The media is highly responsible for part of this exposure as it is the vehicle of many sexist printed and visual materials circulating all over the years, even though it might sound odd, after decades of political/civil conquests regarding women’s rights and their current “privileged” positioning in society.

Despite the fact feminists have been trying to challenge, both in theory and in praxis, the patriarchal order still prevails. I associate the events of discursive and social practices of female suffering, media exposure and stereotyping as metaphors of horror and excess. The horror is that of being “stalked” in a regular basis by a sexist discourse and, eventually with physical consequences (rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, just to name a few). The excess lies in the reiteration, propagation and naturalization of such discriminatory practices against women.

Therefore, I find relevant to problematize the way women have been represented in films and what extent such representations produce actual harmful effects on women’s lives, thus transcending the realm of representation. My focus is to examine how cinema, specifically slasher movies have been portraying hysterical, fragile and agonized women (and what their positions in these movies are) who serve as a means to the spectacle of blood. For Linda Williams in her article “Film Bodies, Gender, Genre and Excess” (1991), “the body displayed is predominantly female” (4).

The exploitation of women in media is a recurrent issue. We can recall the women from the 1950s who appeared in advertisements of

gadgets which stand for technology and progress in the era after World War II, yet women's lives in the private space were shallow and hopeless. They were mere objects²⁶ to serve their husbands being therefore deprived of their intellectual abilities. Such scenario has been overtly theorized by early feminists such as Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan writes about the emptiness many women experienced during the post-second World War II. She claims that women were not at all emotionally and personally fulfilled simply due to their marital status and motherhood. This problem of women's dissatisfaction the author called "The Problem that has no Name" —, since most women did not understand why they would feel so unhappy. After all, as part of the U.S. middle class, they seemed to have everything a woman would desire: a comfortable house, a husband to serve and children to take care of.

Friedan recalls Freud's psychoanalytical theory of the penis envy, which states that the reason why women feel inferior is because of the symbolic envy of the male genital organ and thus this sense of lack is only entirely fulfilled when they have an infant. Not only for Friedan, but for many other feminists such theory has many gaps. For instance: a) Woman is not merely what is missing in man. In her words, women are not a *homme manqué* (a lame man). b) Woman cannot simply be associated with her reproduction capability.

As regards to psychoanalytical theory applied to film studies, the ideas of the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey are central to my study. She has had her work extensively referred over the years in various fields of study such as anthropology, sociology, language, philosophy, among others. In her extremely influential article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), first published on *Screen*, the author instead of exclusively investigating negative images of women, as structuralist feminists had been doing, problematizes the unconscious mechanisms that operate within the social/cultural machine between the bearer of the gaze and the diegesis.

²⁶ Bryan Forbe's *The Stepford Housewives* (1975) is a science fiction comedy film which brings up to debate the issues raised by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*. It tells about a group of perfect housewives in a small community who turned out to be robots. Later on, Donna Haraway in her article "Cyborg Manifesto" (1983) raises relevant questions regarding the politics of feminist subjectivity linked to issues such as technology, nature versus culture, among others.

Mulvey suggests that an avant-garde cinema should work as a means to destroy the visual pleasure of classical narrative apparatus. The alternative for breaking with Hollywood patterns is for her, that desire when analyzed loses its power and thus “it is said that analyzing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it” (5). Mulvey also co-wrote and co-directed more than six avant-garde films. One of her most acclaimed films is *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977) in which the film’s cinematographer appears before the camera so as to break the cinematic illusion that operates in the eyes of the beholder.

But it is not only moving images which provide material for an analysis of how women have been misrepresented in art. The work of Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics*, denounces the use of sexist ideas of many literary authors from the 20th century such as D.H Lawrence and Henry Miller, not to mention some texts of Ernest Hemingway. Millet argues that the relations between man and women were unbalanced as men occupied a dominant position both in the narrative and in the literary canon (a fact that is widely debated still today among many researchers). For her, women are represented in a way that the reader should identify with standard patterns of femininity such as sensitivity subservience, cooperation, among others. However, what lacks in Millet’s argument is to advance from stating that “women are negatively represented in media and literature” to “why women are portrayed in such sexist manner?” I add: Does the reader identify with such negative images? Does the reader read such literary texts from a “male” perspective?

In this sense, the work of the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey employs psychoanalytical theory to denounce the exploitation of women in classical Hollywood films and explains the unconscious mechanism that constructs what she calls the male gaze. According to Mulvey,

the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is two-fold. She first symbolises the castration threat by her real absence of a penis, and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic. Once this has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end, it does not last into the world of law and language except as a memory which oscillates between memory of maternal plenitude and memory of lack. Both are posited on

nature (or on anatomy in Freud's famous phrase). Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. She turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic). Either she must gracefully give way to the word, the Name of the Father and the Law, or else struggle to keep her child down with her in the half-light of the imaginary. Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. (6).

For her, women's objectification occurs in the level of the symbolic power the phallus possesses. According to Freud, the presence of women in the patriarchal unconscious operates in terms that it is the lack of the penis in women that threatens the symbolic power of the phallus. In this sense, as Mulvey states, women are merely bearers of meaning, but do not produce it. Hence, Freud has been accused by many feminists for being sexist in his argument that women's oppression by men can be explained on the grounds of the fear of castration they have. In one of his lectures, in 1932, Freud claims that in the oedipal complex the boy is in love with his mother and such facts "protect" him to have his male organ castrated. He argues that castration "finds no place in women, for though they have a castration complex they cannot have a fear of being castrated" (109).

The problem in Freud's argument lies on his hypothesis of the fear of castration that imprisons woman in a position of object (or

abject?²⁷) in comparison to man, who is the subject: “He” possesses the male organ, the signifier of male power in opposition to the female lack. In fact, it is one of my intentions in this study to reiterate Mulvey’s ideas of using psychoanalysis as a “political weapon” that according to her “gets us nearer to the roots of [women²⁸] oppression, it brings an articulation of the problem closer, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught within the language of the patriarchy”(5).

In the context of psychoanalysis, Mulvey also brings up the term scopophilia to delimitate the system of pleasure that has been created in Hollywood narrative cinema. The term conveys the voyeuristic system of the pleasure of looking at figures on the screen. For Mulvey, the way the movie theaters are structured as dark spaces creates a sense of isolation/separation from “reality”. Therefore, the individual is free to look at the private world which is being shown on the screen. In this context, curiosity plays an important role in the process of looking at images of women within the diegesis.

²⁷The work of Barbara Creed *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993) presents a rather subversive perspective to the objectification of women in cinema. She also draws on psychoanalytical theory, yet to deconstruct the patriarchal position of women as being victimized. She theorizes on the female body as the abject and thus the castrator, not the castrated (which lacks the phallus). It is thus, woman’s reproductive system which attributes to them such “abjected” connotation. Creed argues that “one of the key figures of abjection is the mother who becomes an abject at that moment when the child rejects her for the father who represents the symbolic order” (36). For her, women can function as signs that stand for bodies which are the locus of devils *The Exorcist* (1973), the evil womb (the aforementioned *Rosemary’s Baby*), castrator mothers *Psycho* (1960), *Friday the 13th Part 1* (1980) and *Insidious II* (2013). Even though being extremely relevant for the psychoanalytical investigation of woman in horror films, the work of Barbara Creed is not in-depth presented in this doctoral dissertation due to the fact the female figures I aim at investigating do not particularly link to the iconography of woman’s body as abject such as Creed suggests.

²⁸My addition

For Mulvey, there are three looks related to cinema: a) the look of the camera as a device that records the pro-filmic events; b) the look of the audience while watching the events on the screen and, finally c) the look of the characters within the narrative/action. The importance of these three looks for my study are: The first look, in the sense I analyze the relevant scenes that illuminate my arguments, the second look makes possible the investigation of gender relations of object/subject between spectator and the diegesis, and the last look also enables the analyzes of filmic elements such as mise-en-scène, acting and editing in order to convey a certain kind of representation. Mulvey states that the bearer of the gaze is predominantly in a male position no matter his/her sexed body is. Many critics pointed out that Mulvey's theory lacks discussion on the inclusion of other social groups such as women, lesbians, gays, black people as the bearers of the gaze (like bell hooks, who brilliantly debates it in her article "The Oppositional Gaze", 1993).

However, Mulvey uses the term male gaze to connote a position that is "masculine" rather than a physical attribute or sexual orientation. For her, the "male" gaze is a construction imposed by the cinematic apparatus which controls the viewer's look and produces it as being male. An example of the construction of the male gaze is the famous scene of James Bond's film *Satanic Dr. No* (1962) in which the Bond Girl (Ursula Andrews) is leaving the sea wearing a sexy bikini²⁹ while Bond (in a scopophilic, heterosexual look) is hidden behind the bushes gazing at her, contemplating her built body. We, as viewers, are oriented to see the scene through Bond's "eyes" no matter our sexed body or sexual positioning/orientation. The construction of the scene, the whole mise-en-scène, the camera angles and the props (like her bikini and her long wet beautiful hair) all connote the female sexualization (so well wide spread nowadays in mass media of commercials, ads, movie posters, among others) her character carries out. Bond is within the diegesis gazing at the bond girl while she is being looked at without returning the gaze. Mulvey's main argument in her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) is that, we as viewers, occupy a masculine position which is controlled by narrative systematization in which men act subjectively, while women objectively.

²⁹It is relevant to problematize that in this very same scene the Bond Girl is porting a knife. If it is assumed, in the narrative, that the knife represents the phallus (the male organ) one can say that James Bond (as well as the audience has a bisexual gaze).

In addition to the construction of James Bond's scene, there is Hitchcock's cinematically acclaimed shower scene in *Psycho* (1960). We, as the viewers are "invited" by the narrative to follow the objective eye of the camera while Norman Bates's "mother" (Anthony Perkins) stabs Marion (Janet Leigh) to death. Such addition to Mulvey's previous theory in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" is developed by the author in her article "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1981), in which the male position is seen as fluid in the sense the characters within the diegesis have also gender fluidity. Not unlike Norman Bates (his mother) in *Psycho*, the character Pearl, in King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1945), may be seen as metaphors for transvestism. Therefore, Mulvey suggests that the masculine position is negotiated along lines of gender, sex and sexuality, yet fixed by social/cultural norms of subjectivity.

Furthermore, Ann Kaplan in her article "Is the Male Gaze?" (1983) still stands in psychoanalytical theory, but seems to add elements to Mulvey's arguments. To compose her arguments, Kaplan cites the male figures of John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and Robert Redford in *The Electric Horseman* (1980), considered the popular sex symbols of that time, to explain that women also have pleasure in gazing at attractive men on the screen, but fail to act on it. Not differently from Mulvey's words, Kaplan argues that "men do not simply look; their gaze carries with it the power of action and possession that is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return the gaze, but cannot act on it" (3).

In "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1981), Mulvey provides a response³⁰ in dialogue with her own previous ideas in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". She still stands for her initial argument, yet clarifies that the male gaze is not associated to the sex of the individual, the third person "he", but to a position that is occupied by the spectator, and thus she includes the woman (in its many forms of the term) to the system of the gaze. Thus, to consider the pleasure the spectator feels by watching a feminine figure relates to viewer's sex drive no matter the sex or sexual orientation of the individual. It is not the man bearer the gaze, but a position which is

³⁰ If Mulvey's "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" (1980) is read more carefully one can say that she had already problematized the main issue brought up by Kaplan's "Is the male gaze?" (1983).

predominantly male yet being occupied by a woman or man not to mention their orientation. Mulvey explains that

so many times over the years since my article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," was published in *Screen*, I have been asked why I only used the male third person singular to stand in for the spectator. At the time, I was interested in the relationship between the image of woman on the screen and the "masculinization" of the spectator position, regardless of the actual sex (or possible deviance) of any real live movie-goer. In-built patterns of pleasure and identification impose masculinity as "point of view," a point of view which is also manifest in the general use of the masculine third person. (7).

Mulvey also recalls Freud theory on femininity, to enlighten the system of objectification and its consequences on the differences of power relations between men and women mainly regarding to the psychosexual. Mulvey adds that

We have called the motive force of sexual life "the libido." Sexual life is dominated by the polarity of masculine-feminine; thus the notion suggests itself of considering the relation of the libido to this antithesis. It would not be surprising if it were to turn out that each sexuality had its own special libido appropriated to it, so that one sort of libido would pursue the aims of a masculine sexual life and another sort those of a feminine one. But nothing of the kind is true. There is only one libido, which serves both the masculine and the feminine functions. To it itself we cannot assign any sex; if, following the conventional

equation of activity and masculinity, we are inclined to describe it as masculine, we must not forget that it also covers trends with a passive aim. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition "feminine libido" is without any justification. Furthermore, it is our impression that more constraint has been applied to the libido when it is pressed into the service of the feminine function, and that — to speak teleologically — Nature takes less careful account of its [that function's] demands than in the case of masculinity. And the reason for this may lie — thinking once again ideologically — in the fact that the accomplishment of the aim of biology has been entrusted to the aggressiveness of men and has been made to some extent independent of women's consent (32).

Finally, Laura Mulvey's latest work, *Death 24x a Second* (2006) is also relevant for the development of my argument regarding the system that operates between the spectator and the characters (especially female) in the diegesis. In this work, Mulvey reevaluates her ideas on the narrative, first theorized in her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and followed by "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". She argues that technological innovations in both filmmaking and interactive movie players (like DVDs and Blu-Rays) which Mulvey calls "the aesthetic of the new" (3). provides means for the spectator to manipulate the flow of the narrative.

Hence, one might say that it is possible to perceive the way the system of gaze has changed throughout the years. For instance, recent horror movies, some of them box office hits such as the *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *REC* (2007), *Paranormal Activity* (2007), were made according to the aesthetics of a documentary, with raw footage, and allegedly believed to be based on true facts in which the viewer is expected to have "real" sensations of horror experience while watching such films.

In order to have a more accurate perspective about horror movies and the system that operates between the monster and the characters within the diegesis, I use the arguments of Judith Halberstam (1995) about monstrosity regarding the film *The Silence of the Lambs*. She analyzes the character of Buffalo Bill that, for her, has gender fluidity. Such perception matches my intention of investigating the same character within gender and queer theory as Halberstam understands that “Bill’s extreme violence against women lies not on his gender confusion or his sexual orientation but in his humanist presumption that his sex and his gender and his orientation must all match-up to a mythic norm of white heterosexual masculinity” (165). Such argument of Bill’s gender confusion versus what is depicted in the narrative might be key to understand the gaze through a queer perspective in order to dialogue with and problematize the binary psychoanalytical opposition passive/active(female/male).

1.3. Significance of the Research

Working with slasher films is not an easy task. As a film researcher, I have to daily deal with graphic images of violence and blood bath. Moreover, after coming to the conclusion that the female body is the main object of this slaughter made me want to investigate deeply about the place of gender in slasher films. According to Showalter in her work *Speaking of Gender* (1992), the importance of studying gender in contemporary theory and criticism has become pivotal. For the author, “You can’t do anything now without making reference to gender. You can’t discuss Donne or Byron, the Elizabethan stage or the modernist poem, the films of F.W Murnau or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, without talking about gender” (1).

It is, thus, my intention in this doctoral dissertation to be able to instigate questions regarding the associations of gender within slasher films and thus, attempt to promote relevant contribution for the field of studies of slasher films in the academic context. Because I was a volunteer teacher in the Cinema Course at UFSC, in the last semester of 2013, I had the chance to discuss, with the students, the main issues I tackle in my dissertation. By doing that, I noticed their interest of employing film, gender, feminist and queer theory to their works, though the course still does not offer a mandatory specific discipline in these areas.

I also believe that horror films, in general, occupy a multiple place on people's minds. Vera Dika in *Games of Terror* (1985) believes that

almost every review of the recent horror film addresses itself in some way to these questions. Commentators give psychological and cultural explanations for the phenomenon, and pose the films' excessive violence as its distinguishing characteristic. Through these films, some say, the audience experiences a catharsis, a release from their own fears of bodily injury, or a release from the social, or political tensions of the day. Others see the films as an intense physical experience, "a rollercoaster ride" in which viewing one of the last taboos, i.e., gore, gives the audience the thrill they seek. Still others see violence in horror films as they always have, as a displacement of the audience's sexual desires onto the viewing of aggressive acts. (6).

Finally, I believe that by working with gender issues in slasher films might open space for the discussion about the patriarchal system that still operates in mass media discourse. The two films I select for my analysis bring up relevant material of investigation of gender depictions in slasher films. Unlike *Halloween*, *The Silence of the Lambs* is not directly associated to the subgenre of slasher films, but it does provide consistent filmic evidence in order to investigate the figure of the final girl, which is paramount for this doctoral study.

1.4. Research Questions and Procedures

These questions establish the limits of my research and identify the main problem I find in the two films under investigation. They are as it follows:

— Can the horror genre, namely slasher films, really contribute to an accurate investigation of the operational system of the gaze?

— Considering technological advances in filmmaking as well as the mode audience sees a movie, how has the gaze in horror films evolved?

— How can psychoanalytical feminist, gender and queer theory work together to present relevant criticism for diminishing the patriarchal modes presented in horror films (especially the slasher subgenre)?

The method I adopt for each chapter of filmic analysis of this dissertation is to select relevant scenes that, in combination with filmic elements such as framing, mise-en-scène, colors, facial expressions, editing and so on unveil hidden meanings within the diegesis and their implications to the system of viewer/screen.

Although the study of adaptation is not the core of my research investigation, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, I utilize some excerpts from the book tied with visual images (scenes/sequences) of its filmic version in order to find how they overlap or undermine meaning in order to provide a more substantial analysis of my argument.

The following chapter of this doctoral dissertation presents an overview of the concept of representation (Hall, 1973, 1997), as well as a panorama on the slasher film (main elements and influences), debates on monstrosity (Carroll, 1990, Freeland, 2000, Jeha, 2007) and the problematization of the figure of the final girl (Clover, 1989, Dika, 1985).

CHAPTER II

Representation and the Slasher Film

In the previous sections of this dissertation I presented a personal account of my experience as a viewer of the horror genre, more specifically slasher films. This retrospective allowed me to illustrate for the reader my main motivation for writing this work: how the unconscious processes of my psyche operated in order to convey a stereotypical representation of the pair monster/final girl. In order to provide theoretical framework for my ideas I have elected theorists from the field of film and psychoanalyses, feminism, gender and queer studies.

Having said that, I expand, in this present section, theoretical concepts that I find relevant for the progress of this dissertation. Because I work with depictions of female characters in slasher films as well as the mechanisms of identification between the viewer and the film, I first review the concepts of Stuart Hall on the work of representation, especially in the sense of the effects (mis)representation may have in social practices, namely sexist discourse, objectification of women, homophobia, just to name a few.

2.1. Representation

Stuart Hall is a sociologist and cultural theorist whose work has been acknowledged by its relevance for the field of cultural studies, mainly for his focus on the work of representation and cultural identities. He is one of the founders of the British Cultural Studies and his ideas have been applied in many other fields of research such as feminism, film and media studies, among others.

The theorist Liesbet van Zoonen in her book *Feminist Media Studies* (1994) argues on the importance of Hall's theory on the production of meaning in media texts for the area of feminist and media studies as she believes "it does provide a useful framework to review and arrange feminist media theory and research, suggesting the central question to be: how is gender discourse negotiated in the 'moments' of the construction of media meanings- production, text and reception" (9). Furthermore, according to Hall, in his essay "Encoding/Decoding" (1973), the interpretation of meanings does not have to be symmetrical,

but to regard each subject's social, cultural and political position³¹. Hall writes that

The degree of symmetry - that is the degree of 'understanding' and-'misunderstanding' in the communicative exchange - depends on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry (relations of equivalence) established between the positions of the 'personifications', encoder-producer and decoder-receiver. But this in turn depends on the degrees of identity/non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit, interrupt or systematically distort what has been transmitted. The lack of fit between the codes has a great deal to do with the structural differences of relation and position between broadcasters and audiences, but it also has something to do with the asymmetry between the codes of 'source' and 'receiver' at the moment of transformation into and out of the discursive form (20).

³¹ A concept I understand Hall would call later in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1994) as the positions of enunciation. Hall states that "practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write - the positions of enunciation. What recent theories of enunciation suggest is that, though we speak, so to say 'in our own name', of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place. Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity' " (222).

Likewise in “Encoding/Decoding” the author discusses in his essay “The Work of Representation” (1997) the process of construction of meaning associated to social/cultural practices. Because I problematize, in the films selected for my analysis, to what extent the representation of women on the “cinematic world” might affect viewer’s own representation of women in the “real world” it is paramount to understand the social/cultural mechanisms in which meaning is produced. We make sense of the world by naming objects, people, feelings, emotions and even spectral figures such as angels, ghosts, wizards, monsters, and so on. Therefore, it is throughout the names we associate to these objects, emotions and events that we produce visual images of what they represent in our “real” world.

The debate over the issue of what a woman means in the world has been widely problematized among a variety of theorists of the areas of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, media studies, among others. The philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in her much quoted influential work *The Second Sex* (1949) builds up a proper distinction between the categories of gender and sex, thus interpreting the former as a social/cultural construction as she claims that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (55).

Therefore, I want to raise a few questions based on the production of meanings the word woman might produce: What is a woman? What comes to mind when we think of the generic term woman? One can say that it produces various meanings in our minds. For instance, if we consider the example of women in mainstream cinema we may find a wide range of possible representations: mothers, nurturers, wives, the ones who take care of the house and protect their children, the witches, the prostitute, the romantic one who waits for her prince charming to fulfill her needs, and finally for the interest of this dissertation, the wise, sensible girl who is, in slasher movies, terrified by a monster, but eventually becomes the lone survivor or the independent. Hence, what I attempt to investigate in this study is how social/cultural/political representations of women operate within the cinematic apparatus to convey meaning in our “real world” and thus what physical effects these representations come to materialize in “real” female bodies. The feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in 2005 in an interview for *Revista de Estudos Feministas* (REF) argues about the distinction of the limits (or the absence of it) between representation in cinema and the “real” world. Mulvey says that

for some feminist theorists today we live under a regime scopophilic - where the power of the image transcends the art, media and narrative; transcends representation and contaminates life. Would the image, these days, be the 'real'? For example, the image of women that circulates in the media has become a central signifier, not only for the male gaze, but for the process of subjectification and construction of women as subjects. So we live a new system of the body, body building, women trying to adapt to these powerful images of beauty. To the extent that the images come to the real they become real, are not represented.³²

For Mulvey, the reiteration of stereotypical female images in cinema linked to social/cultural norms imposed by the media results into the materialization of such representations that insofar fit in to the “imaginary” cinematic universe, thus becoming part of the material one. I am interested to investigate in the slasher films selected for analysis to what extent representations of the subgenre itself (slasher) and the main female character the final girl (but also other secondary female/male characters) produce meaning as well as how the viewer receives and decodifies such images into our “real” world.

In his essay “The Work of Representation” (1997), Hall highlights the importance of representation in the study of culture. He understands representation as the central component for the production of meaning through language in a given cultural community. He adds

³² My translation. MALUF, Sônia Weidner; MELLO, Cecilia Antakly de and PEDRO, Vanessa. Políticas do olhar: feminismo e cinema em Laura Mulvey. *Rev. Estud. Fem.* [online]. 2005, vol.13, n.2 [cited 2012-05-10], pp. 343-350. Available from: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0104-026X2005000200007&lng=en&nrm=iso>. ISSN 0104-026X. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-026X2005000200007>.

that "Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things" (15). Hence, if we consider the aforementioned representations of women in films or the "represented" women Mulvey comments on, can we come to the conclusion that what cinema shows on the screen would stand for/represent the multiplicity that the concept "woman" produces in our world? I attempt to say no. The images of women on films are instead signs associated to a certain "language" of a social cultural group who decodify these signs and thus produce meaning according to their interpretation of the world (social/cultural context) they live in.

Hall believes that "Signs are organized into languages and it is the existence of common languages which enable us to translate our thoughts (concepts) into words, sounds or images, and then to use these, operating as language, to express meanings and communicate thoughts to other people"(18). According to the author, signs need to be read into a common language so as to people can communicate with each other and thus produce meaning. He adds that "this translatability is not given by nature or fixed by the gods. It is the result of a set of social conventions. It is fixed socially, fixed in culture" (22). However, to think of the sign "woman" cannot carry a fixed meaning. Rather than "classifying" women into stable categories, in a "language" that assumes that all women should behave, think or represent in the world the same way, we must embrace the plurality of feminisms as suggested by Kaplan (as I mention in the first chapter of this dissertation). She resists "the monolithic 'woman' who was really a white Western woman, its neglect of the specificity of minority and other marginalized women, its generally heterosexual and Eurocentric focus, and so on." (5). In addition to Kaplan, Hall explains that "[People]³³ unconsciously internalize the codes which allow them to express certain concepts and ideas through their systems of representation- writing, speech, gesture, visualization, and so on- and to interpret ideas which are communicative to them using the same systems" (22)

Expanding the concept of representation, Hall presents three approaches to meaning in representation: the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist. According to him,

³³ My addition.

In the reflective approach, meaning is thought to lie in the object, the event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world. We can also call it as mimetic approach. **The second approach** to meaning in representation argues the opposite case. It is the speaker the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. Words mean what the author intends they should mean. This is the intentional approach.

The third approach recognizes this public, social character of language. Things don't mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems. Hence it is called the constructionist approach. (33)

Hall's constructionist approach draws on the theory of the linguist Saussure that categorizes the mechanism of the construction of meaning as threefold: the sign, the signifier and the signified. However, for Saussure the production of meaning is by any means a direct via between the three elements. Hall states that "it is the relation between them, fixed by our cultural and linguistic codes, which sustains representation." (31). The sign is not a fixed entity, but an arbitrary one due to its subjection to history. The association between the signifier and the signified is intrinsically permeated by social/cultural norms given in a specific period in time. In other words "[meanings] can never be finally fixed, but they are always subject to change, both from one cultural context and from period to another. There is thus no single, unchanging, universal 'true meaning' (32). Built on this premise, one can say that meaning is not fixed and thus interpretation plays an important role in the system of representation. It becomes a social event which both speaker and reader/viewer take part in the process of "interpreting" the system which is structured by language and its users.

Hence, Saussure theory on representation is rich due to its focus on language as a social construct. However, Hall's remarks convey the idea of deconstruction that lacks development in Saussure's structuralist theory as he does not "transcend" the structural limits of the two key elements of the sign: the signifier and the signified. Hall states that "Saussure's focus on language may have been too exclusive. The

attention to its formal aspects did divert attention away from the more interactive and dialogic features of language” (36). Deconstruction is an approach of analysis, applied in many areas of study, including film. It was developed by the post-structuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida who reads the construction of meanings as unstable and not fixed like in Saussure’s interpretation of the signifier and signified. Once a text is delivered to its audience meaning it is no longer in the hands of the author, but open for a multiplicity of interpretations the reader/viewer might convey.

Derrida in a collection of interviews entitled “Positions” (1972) comments on the nature of the term deconstruction and its intrinsic relation to the elements signifier and signified Saussure first conceptualized. In Derrida’s words “ [Saussure] accedes to the classical exigency of what I have proposed to called a ‘transcendental signified’ which in and of itself into essence would refer to no signifier, would exceed the chain of signs, and would no longer itself function as a signifier.” (20). The philosopher adds that “‘Now’, ‘everyday language’ is not innocent or neutral. It is the language of Western metaphysics, and it carries with it not only a considerable number of presuppositions of all types, but also presuppositions inseparable from metaphysics, which, although little attended to, are knotted into a system” (20).

Based on Derrida’s words one can say that the meaning is not fixed in the referent which it is associated with. On the contrary, meaning is opened to a variety of multiple interpretations which are socially/cultured constructed through language. Hence, the work of representation connects to the complex associations established in the triad slasher film, the monster and the female characters. The meaning that each one of the components carries is not, thus fixed in one specific sign (the Saussurean set of referent and reference), but lies on the hands of the viewer that based on their social/cultural experiences will decodify the message and therefore produce their own meanings.

2.2 Slas (her) Films: A Genre (der) Trouble?

I have been on a regular basis inquired about the object of analysis of my dissertation. Whenever I say it is horror movies (not to mention its lower subgenre, the slasher) people instantly look at me in dissatisfaction. Curiously, some of them even mimetically reproduce scared (or even disgusted) faces as if they were watching a horror film in the darkened spaces of their homes or the movie theater. Interestingly,

it is that such reactions might connote the low status which horror movies occupy in the system of genres as well as people's minds.

According to Linda Williams "Film Bodies: Genre, Gender and Excess" (1991), horror is a low genre due to its excess of gratuitous violence and blood shedding. The author associates the horror genre with porn and weepie ones. The former because of the excess which lies on the grounds of explicit sexual practices, yet the latter for its excess of the melodramatic tone. Therefore, what comes to the surface for Williams is that the body displayed in all film genres is the female. In the horror film for its depiction of mutilation and (blood) spectacle, whereas in the heterosexual porn, for the subjugation of the female body to the male order, and finally in weepie films for the usage of the female body in order to provoke tears.

However, it is my intention to show how slasher films, especially the ones of the period post 1974 (the groundbreaking *Halloween*, 1978) marked an important era for the field of horror in film studies. Slasher films' portrayal of violence and female bodies linked to the figure of the monster (whether "supernatural" or not) becomes pivotal for the understanding of the psychoanalytical processes of identification which operates in the psyche of the viewer (Mulvey, 1974; 1981, Clover, 1989) as well as how society and culture shaped the way these films were produced (Carroll, 1990, Freeland, 2004, Rockoff, 2006).

2.3. The Slasher Film

The origins of the slasher film have been debated by many theorists and critics from the area of film studies. The slasher film has certainly evolved from a variety of genres and subgenres which predominated in distinct periods of the history of horror cinema. An example of that is the exploitation films. They were films that made their debut, in several countries, during the 1920s (not much time after the advent of cinema itself), but became especially popular between the periods of 1960s and 1970s. Exploitation films connote the idea of extreme violence associated with subjects like sex, violence against women, the gore, the grotesque, especially in the form of the freak, monsters, just to name a few. Among a variety of subgenres³⁴ of the

³⁴ I opted for mentioning the subgenres which are rather associated with the one I investigate in this dissertation: the slasher film.

exploitations films are: a) the monster films which were produced after the World War II , and thus the monsters seemed to stand for an eminent threat for the population. *Godzilla* (1954) and *The Creature of the Black Lagoon* (1954) are some examples of the monster films which later became popular with Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and therefore generating a variety of films of the monster subgenre; b) the teenexploitation films, which were films produced mainly during the 1950s dealing with teenage issues like delinquency, drugs and sex and, c) the giallo films (originally made in Italy, but distributed internationally) which depicted extremely gore scenes of murder. Its main representative is *Profondo Rosso* (*Deep Red*, 1975) which curiously has been largely associated to the slasher film *Friday the 13th part II* (1983) due to a scene in which, in both films, a heterosexual couple is having sex , and are eventually killed with a long weapon which perforates the two naked bodies .

Vera Dika in *Games of Terror* (1985) presents a sharp overview on the distinctions of the slasher subgenre regarding its political, social and cultural aspects. The author prefers the term splatter which, for her, is a generic term to define the sort of films portraying gruesome acts on the screen. For Dika, “the films' graphic depiction of violence, especially as it is directed against women, has led parents, church groups, and feminists to denounce them as beneath contempt and as lacking in style and imagination”(3).

Adam Rockoff in *Going to Pieces: the Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film* (2006) presents instead a rather historical perspective to conceptualize the slasher film. The author believes that the origins of the subgenres are rooted in man's appetite for violence. He recalls examples from the violent acts during the Greek and Roman wars up to the opening of the Grand Guinol, in France, which was a theater where people would go to watch repulsive horror scenes being displayed on the stage.

Hence, slasher films have far from a simplistic and straightforward definition. On the contrary it is a complex subgenre which incorporates a wide variety of social, cultural and political issues. Thus, consensus on its conceptualization has not come to materialize among the many theorists who have sought to define it. What I attempt in this section is to contextualize the subgenre slasher in its multiplicity of features in order to convey its importance for my investigation. The theorist Ken Gelder, in the preface of his book *The Horror Reader*, claims that horror, on the one hand

has been one of the more spectacular and controversial genres in both cinema and fiction – its wild excesses relished by some, vilified by many others. Often defiantly marginal, it nevertheless inhabits the very fabric of everyday life, providing us with ways of imagining and classifying our world: what is evil and what is good; what is monstrous and what is ‘normal’; what can be seen and what should remain hidden (preface, xiii)

On the other, the writer Adam Rockoff in his book *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of Slasher Films* (2006) states that slasher breed take in “brutal and gory films which came of age during the late 1970s were the bastard children of the horror film, too gleefully violent and graphic to be embraced by the mainstream, but far too popular and successful to achieve true cult status” (5). Obviously, both the horror genre and slasher subgenres have, throughout the years, been contested by government and censorship authorities due to the excess of violence they convey.

An example of is from the UK, which until recent days has had strict regulation to horror films. During the 1980s, the “video nasties” (those movies who make excessive use of violence, sex, drugs and any other practices that would go against UK moral/ethics laws were prohibited to be screened in major movie theaters all over the UK. The reason for this prosecution was due to a serial killer known as the Yorkshire ripper (1975-1981) who frightened the inhabitants and eventually killed dozens of people in gruesome manners. In 1984, the Video Recordings Act required that all movies produced at that time would be submitted to censorship under the eyes of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). The slasher films were definitely not immune to such regulatory practice. To support the theory that violent movies may have a negative effect on people’s equally violent acts that the journalist Gregg Easterbrook in his article "Yes: Violence in the Media Makes Children Violent states that

for in cinema’s never ending quest to up the ante on violence, murder as sport is the latest frontier. Slasher

flicks began this trend; most portray carnage from a killer's point of view, showing the victim cowering, begging, screaming as the blade goes in, treating each death as a moment of festivity for the killer (Many killers seek feelings of power over their victims, criminology finds; by revealing in the pleas of their victims, slasher movies promote this base emotion) (52).

Based on the journalist's words, slasher films bring up the issue of the influence of media on people's behavior. The Columbine massacre in 2001, for instance, is a clear example of the debate generated over the motivation for the mass murder, committed by two teenage high school boys, in a North-American school. However, how relevant it is to decide whether "fiction" affects or not "reality" or vice-versa? Are our social practices permeated by our *positions of enunciation* as suggests Stuart Hall? My answer is Yes and No. Our social practices do reflect on what we watch on the screen and vice-versa. The cinematic apparatus is by no means free of political ideologies and neither are we. The distinction between "reality" and "fiction" is thus erased in the moment that the viewer engages in the narrative's mechanisms that operate within the diegesis.

However, for many theorists and film critics (Clover 1989, Dika, 2004, Rockoff, 2006) the very nature of slasher films is to some extent to contest the American way of life of the 1980s. While the boom of the cult of the body emerged and people would go to health clubs seeking for the perfect body, a large group of beautiful bodies were mutilated and slashed on the screen. The locale of some slasher films is also not free of social critique. The North-American suburbia, which stands for middle-class family houses with respected North-American citizens, is the setting for the monsters Freddy Krueger and Michael Myers (*Halloween*, 1978) to kill careless adolescents while they disrespect the social order of peaceful Elm Street (Wes Craven's *Nightmare on Elm Street*, 1984) and Haddonfield (John Carpenter's *Halloween*, 1978).

Slasher films have not merely the commercial purpose of entertainment, though it seems to be noticeable the enormous number of moviegoers (according to Clover, predominantly male teenagers) that identify with those characters in the narrative that seek fun, sex, drugs and independence. Adam Rockoff in his extensive research on slasher films points out that these movies have, on the contrary “shrewd social commentaries on society’s mores” (3).

Another worth-commenting work on the complexities of slasher films is “A Adolescência como Pesadelo” (2010). In this text the author Mário Corso draws on psychoanalytical theory of the repressed sexuality of adolescents to debate over the process of identification with the viewer and the characters. For the author,

É importante notar que nessas tramas a morte chega junto com o surgimento das questões sexuais. O que esses filmes evocam, e por isso fazem sucesso entre adolescentes, é que o sexo, embora ansiosamente esperado, também invoca uma carga mortífera e um medo paralisante, entre outros o de ser devorado ou destruído no ato da entrega erótica. Além disso, já há nesse momento uma cobrança pelo bom desempenho sexual, pela demonstração pública de sucesso e potência (204).

Moreover, according to movie director John Carpenter in an interview for the documentary *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of Slasher Films* (2006), states that

slasher films reflected an era of political instability and mourning for the Unites States. Jimmy Carter, former president of the USA during the period of 1977-1981 had been involved in the Iran hostages crisis (1978). In the same year, Jim Jones, a religious leader of the Peoples Temple was the responsible for the murder of 902 people; the biggest mass killing

the country has ever seen, only second to the one of 9/11³⁵. In face to such shocking events Carpenter believes that his Halloween was a “safe scare” for the North-American people³⁶. Carpenter’s hypothesis is a rather suspicious excuse to the attacks he received for having produced violent and misogynist films. The director has been largely criticized by media due to the excessive violence against women portrayed in his major blockbuster of the slasher breed *Halloween* (198).

Although critics, theorists and reviewers have argued about the debatable definition of the slasher film as well as its effects on the viewer, the subgenre inevitably follows a set of rules, paradigms and cinematic styles that together convey gender and social moral values³⁷. To illustrate it, I borrow from Carol Clover’s *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989) the basic structure of slasher films regarding the killer, locale, weapon and victims.

The Killer — The killer in slasher films is usually a man who experienced a certain kind of childhood trauma or with no apparent motivation kill groups of teenagers during festive days (Halloween, Valentine’s Day, Christmas, among others). Jason Voorhees, in *Friday the 13* (1980), is a child who gets drowned in the Crystal Lake while the camp counselors, instead of taking care of him, were having sex. Michael Myers, in *Halloween* (1978), is a six year old boy that, with no evident reason, assassinates her sister Judith after she had sex with her

³⁵ Aviva Briefel’s *Horror after 9/11* is an important work which theorizes on the position of horror productions post-9/11.

³⁶ Rockoff, Adam. *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of Slasher Films*, 2006.

³⁷ It is relevant to highlight here that what I mean by “social moral values” is the expectation conservative society (as a set of rules, norms ideologies, and paradigms) imposes on people so that they must behave in a pre established model of social and cultural patterns.

boyfriend; Norman Bates, in *Psycho*(1960), is the owner of a motel who seems to have experienced a traumatic childhood in the hands of a “castrator” mother; Derek is the innocent college student in *Terror Train* (1980), who took part in a prank who went wrong against him and thus return after some years to seek revenge. According to Clover, “[The male killers³⁸] even whose childhood is not immediately at issue and who display no overt gender confusion are often sexually disturbed” (195). For her, female killers are far different from the male ones. For her, women murder not because they are sexually oppressed, but because they have been oppressed. For Clover,

the Female killers are few and their reasons for killing are significantly different from men's. With the possible exception of the murderous mother in *Friday the Thirteenth I*, they show no gender confusion. Nor is their motive overtly psychosexual; their anger derives in most cases not from childhood experience but from specific moments in their adult lives in which they have been abandoned or cheated on by men (196).

Such issue seems to lie on the grounds of the dichotomy between man and woman (men stands for the oppressor and women the oppressed). However, the discussion over male and female killers³⁹ is

³⁸My addition

³⁹. Clover believes that the majority of the killers/monsters are male and when they are female their motivation are distinct from those who are male. For the purpose of this dissertation I will only develop my arguments regarding male monsters (Michael Myers, Buffalo Bill and Hannibal Lecter) though I understand the existence of studies dealing with female monster (like the referred one of Barbara Creed in my previous section). An example of that is the monster in the trilogy *Aliens*. In one of the films the monster is female and it thus raises worth-commenting questioning regarding the male “nature” of monsters in slasher films. Besides that, issues like the queerness

more complex rather than sheer associations to pre established gender norms which position women less than men (once they have been cheated or abandoned by them).

The locale — The place in slasher films that symbolizes fear and terror is often a house (The Myers' house which after the killing symbolizes death and fear), a (disturbed) family house *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, (1974) a summer camp (*Friday the 13th parts 1, 2, 3, 4*), an amusement park (*The Funhouse*, 1981). For Clover, it is "a terrible place in which, most often a house or tunnel, in which the victims sooner or later find themselves is a venerable element of horror" (197). The terrible place for the two films selected for analysis is in *Halloween*, the houses of North-American suburbia whereas in *The Silence of the Lambs* this terrible place is Bill's basement and Lecter's cell. In *Halloween*, the killing takes place in two suburban houses: the first is the Myers' house where Michael murders his sister and the second is the house of the young child Lindsey (the little girl that one of the victims is taking care of). These houses apparently do not represent any threat to the future victims; on the contrary they are peaceful family homes of middle-class North-American citizens. Yet, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, the locale of the killings is twofold: a) Buffalo Bill's house is the central locale for the murder of his victims whom he skins to death. It is a basement where he keeps them, usually inside of a well, before he prepares⁴⁰ their skin to eventually be removed; b) Hannibal, the Cannibal's maximum security cell as well as the other prisoner called Migs.

of the monster arise if it is analyzed more carefully. The initial monster is male and then switches to be female in the second film and finally become male again in the third film. Thomas Doherty in a psychoanalytical approach in his article "Genre, Gender and the *Aliens* trilogy" states that "The alien of *Alien* (1979) is configured as a forbidding phallus threatening to penetrate the female. All three of his face incarnations –face hunger, chest buster, and dragon jaw-suggest the outline of the masculine member. In *Aliens* (1986), however, the creature is female, a queen generating unholy spawn. In *Aliens 3* (1992), the she reverts again to a he, pursuing the female to penetrate and impregnate her. *Vagina Dentada* and phallic drill, the alien is a cross-dressing monster from the id whose sexual confusion mirrors the shifting gender dynamics of the series" (196).

⁴⁰Buffalo Bill obliges his victims to wear skin lotion so that it becomes

thinner and easily to be removed.

Bill's basement and Hannibal Lecter recall Gothic settings of literary works. The slasher film has deep associations with Gothic literature, especially regarding its locale and female figures. *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), by Horace Walpole, considered the first Gothic novel has as its setting a supernatural castle with dark vaults. Similarly to *The Castle of Otranto*, Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846) also presents the imagery of a dingy and doomed underground setting. Interestingly enough, in the novels Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), the castles also resemble locales of slasher films. The former, equally to Hannibal and Migs's locale, presents a cell where the lunatic Reinfield resides in an asylum. In addition, Victor Frankenstein's castle (specifically his underground where he makes most part of his experiments) resembles Bill's basement. In addition, in *Frankenstein*, Victor wants to build a monster made out of different parts of deceased bodies. Likewise Victor, Bill wants to build a "new" body, but made out of women's skin. In other words, in both cinematic and literary texts, the locales are props that convey crime (Hannibal Lecter), madness (Reinfield and Migs), danger (Bill) and eventually transformation (the new bodies of the Creature, in *Frankenstein* and Buffalo Bill, in *The Silence of the Lambs*)

The weapons — The weapons in slasher films are recurrently sharp objects such as knives, machetes, harpoons and needles. As I previously commented on *Halloween*'s movie poster, the knife symbolizes the phallic power Michael Myers has over his victims. The long knife resembles the male organ (not "castrated") whereas women, except for Laurie, the final girl, do not make use of weapons in *Halloween*. In Clover's words, weapons

in the hands of the killer, at least, guns have no place in slasher films. Victims sometimes avail themselves of firearms, but like telephones, fire alarms, elevators, doorbells, and car engines, guns fail in the squeeze. In some basic sense, the emotional terrain of the slasher film is pretechnological. The preferred weapons of the killer are knives, hammers, axes, icepicks, hypodermic needles, red hot pokers, pitchforks, and the like (199).

In addition to Clover's comments on weapons, Vera Dika states that women's femininity is intrinsically associated to the (non) use of weapons in slasher films. Dika believes that "the heroine, in her femininity, is not only sweet and docile, but also not usually in the possession of weapons. Unlike the male Western hero, she has no particular skill with weapons, and so is both literally and figuratively "castrated"(242). However, such castration Dika identifies is thought to be solved in the end of most of slasher films. The heroine has phallic appropriation as she makes use of weapons (the same ones the monster/killer use) in order to down her aggressor. It is thus this "phallic appropriation" that concedes the final girl the feature of progressive as suggests Clover in her *Men, Women and Chainsaws*. Laurie after being wounded several times with a knife by Michael Myers is the only character who is able to defend herself by using weapons. She first wounds him with a needle in the neck and then with a weapon, she makes out of a metal hanger hurting his eye and, finally stabs him with the same knife he attempted to murder her.

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Clarice Starling also does not subvert the phallic order presented in *Halloween*. As an FBI agent she has access to guns, usually believed to be a "man's" gun. Throughout the narrative Clarice is trained to be part of the male environment that seems to dominate the FBI. However, Hannibal "cannibalizes" her (without a gun) but with his clever mind through psychological games he convinces Clarice to play.

In other words, the threefold system in slasher films namely the killer, the locale and the weapons are metaphors that unveil crucial elements concerning gender and queer identities. Thus, the killer's characterization associated to the locale (which composes the *mise-en-scène*) and the weapons (props that function as allegories of power) are worth-commenting in the following chapters of filmic analyses of this dissertation.

2.4. The Monster and the Final Girl

Having explored the slasher film and its main elements in the previous section, I shall move to the investigation about the representation of the monster in the realm of horror and slasher films, especially the one regarding its supernatural and inhuman feature. Besides that, I comment on the final girl trope in order to relate it to gender issues of power.

Nöel Carroll, in his important work *Philosophy of Horror and Paradoxes of the Heart*, defines a monster as a “being in violation of the natural order, where the perimeter of the natural order is determined by contemporary science.” He adds that a monster can also be “an empirically impossible being that is ‘impure’ and that arouses fear and disgust” (34). In addition to Carroll, Cynthia Freeland, in *The Naked and the Undead* (2006), believes that a monster is “an evil creature, sometimes empirically impossible, sometimes ‘real-life’” (23). Thus, many are the interpretations regarding monstrosity and the very nature of monster in literature and cinema. The ideas provided by Carroll and Freeland convey the intrinsic association between monstrosity and “real life”. It is therefore my intention, in this section, to problematize the concept of “real-life” allied to the characterization of the monster/serial killer in slasher films.

The work of Julio Jeha is equally important to discuss the nature of monsters in horror films. In his article “Monstros como metáforas do mal” (2007), Jeha’s arguments revolve around the figure of the monster, more specifically its evil feature, and how it has been represented in narratives. For the author, “O problema da representação do mal e a inadequação dos meios de expressão em face da sua imensurabilidade permanecem. O único meio que parece capaz de incluir essa enormidade em si mesmo é a narrativa” (2). In the narrative of slasher films, the figure of the monster has multiple connotations. They range from various aspects of social, cultural and ideological processes that include “reality” as a key element in order to interpret the cinematic “world” of evilness. Based on that, I raise the following questions: “Who is Michael Myers in *Halloween*?”; “Why is he ‘inhuman’?” , and last, but not least, “What does his evil figure represent both in the “cinematic world” and in the “real world”? A possible attempt to answer one of my questions is to borrow Jeha’s argument that “O mal, então, é necessariamente predicado na existência de seres humanos como agentes morais” (4). In *Halloween*, as further developed in the following chapter, Michael functions as a moral regulator of the “impure” group of teenagers who disturb the peace and that go against the social “norms” of traditional United Statesian suburbia. Equally, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, Hannibal Lecter, who only (eats) kills “bad” people, also functions as a social controller “cleaning” impurity from the world.

Besides Michael Myers, there is an extensive array of monsters that have become “immortal” in the history of horror cinema and in our consciousness. They range from early silent movies such as the classic

German expressionist Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), the Victorian Gothic vampire *Dracula* (1897), the Romantic Gothic *Frankenstein* (1818), the modern killer white shark of Spielberg in *Jaws* (1975), fogs, demons (*The Exorcist*, 1973), just to name a few.

Horror films often depict supernatural monsters (either in the "human" or "fantastic" form). For instance, in modern horror, the iconic figure of Freddy Krueger, from the successful slasher film *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) is a child abuser who was burnt alive by a group of infuriated parents who sought vengeance for their children. He becomes a monster, with blades attached to his fingers, who chases teenagers (especially female) in their dreams.

In the films selected for my analysis the two monsters in question have mixed natures according to what Carroll and Freeland conceptualized. In *Halloween*, the "supernatural" killer Michael Myers opens the narrative, as a regular child, who eventually, with no apparent reason kills his sister. After twenty five years, Michael attacks a nurse and escapes from the mental institution he has lived in to kill innocent teenagers on Halloween's night. Doctor Loomis (Donald Pleasence), Michael's psychiatrist, defines him as having "black devil's eyes". But it is not only Dr. Loomis remark that conveys Michael's monstrosity. At the end of the narrative, Michael, after having been hit by a needle in his eye and stabbed in his back is eventually shot innumerable times by his psychiatrist, and thus falling out of the window. However, he is immune to the wounds and disappears. Michael's "supernatural" feature can however be read on the ground of economics. The producers expected to have a successful film and thus wanted to leave an open end so as to profit with possible sequels. Yet, another possibility may arise on the grounds of genre features/style of depicting fantastic and supernatural figures on it.

Both Michael Myers and Freddy Krueger are represented as supernatural monsters. They derive from human forms that eventually become monstrous, fantastic spectrum of horror and fear. The fear such monsters might produce in the viewer's mind is due to the fact that "the fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event." (Todorov: Gelder 15). For Tzvetan Todorov in his essay "Definition of the Fantastic" in the *Horror Reader* (2000), the fantastic confronts our perceptions based on what each subject identifies as being natural or

not. The excess of the natural is the fantastic; it is what exceeds the borders of our world and the uncanny⁴¹.

Likewise Myers is the “supernatural” feature of the killer/monster Jason Voorhees from *Friday the 13th* (1981). Jason is a child with mental problems who, as a child, drown to death due to inattentive camp counselors. After some years of his death, his mother returns to the camp, where she used to work as a cook, to seek revenge for his deceased child. She kills almost all campers, except for one girl who thwarts Jason’s mother. The final girl, at the end of the narrative, rests in a canoe waiting to be rescued by the police when she is inexplicably attacked by a deceased Jason who emerges out of the lake. She, however, wakes up in a hospital bed narrating to the police officers the incident in the lake mentioning the boy’s name, yet the police did not acknowledge the presence of Jason in the lake. Like in *Halloween*, the reliability in terms of the natural (“real-life” monster) is contestable in *Friday the 13th*.

However, differently from Myers, in *Halloween*, Jason’s motivation for his brutal crimes is to take avenge for his mother’s death. In the first sequence of *Friday the 13th part II*, Jason appears, in the city, towards Alice’s place (the final girl in *Friday the 13 part I*, to eventually slay her. After killing her, Jason returns to Camp Crystal Lake to continue the carnage his mother has started.

Conversely, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, though provoking fear and disgust, the monster(s), Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill are not represented as supernatural like in *Halloween*. Hannibal Lecter is a former psychiatrist and currently a cannibal. For this reason he lives in a maximum security prison where he has no contact with the outside world and spends most of his days drawing nostalgic Gothic images of duomos in Florence, Italy. In an interview with Clarice Starling, he recalls the day he ate the tongue of a census’ researcher, who visited him in prison, with fava beans and a good chianti. Lecter is a paradox: although being a merciless cannibal murderer, he is seductive and skilled with words, an attribute associated to his former profession as a psychiatrist. Lecter’s paradoxical behavior also lies on the grounds of his association (not sexually) with the FBI agent Clarice Starling. It is because of her that Hannibal helps the FBI to find a dangerous serial killer nicknamed Buffalo Bill (he “cleans” the world from bad people).

⁴¹Freud’s theory on the uncanny have been presented in his article “The Uncanny I”(1919).

However, Hannibal is still the evil monster, the villain; though he justifies his murders as cleansing acts due to the fact he kills people who actually, he thinks, deserve to die.



Figure 3: Hannibal, the Cannibal-“Real-Life Monster”

Buffalo Bill is a serial killer believed to be, by the forensic section of the FBI, an uncontrollable and extremely dangerous serial killer whose obsession is to remove the skin of young women in order to build up a “new skin. Bill is a transvestite whose surgical procedure for sex change was denied by the government. Thus, in the narrative, Bill’s motivation for his crimes lies on the grounds of psychosexual

dissatisfaction. It is though a debatable and polemic mark due to its presumably problematic discourse in the film, and it has thus been discussed and theorized in the fields of film/gender and queer studies. (Halberstam, 1995, Sedgwick, 1990).



Figure 4: Queer Bill

However, one can say that the triangle between Lecter, Bill and Clarice provide consistent insights for debates over issues of sexual

identities and further discussion on monstrosity and the slasher sub genre⁴².

Finally, the mark of gender and sexuality is recurrent in the figure of the killer monsters in question. For Alan Rockoff in his book *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of Slasher films* (2006), the monster “with few exceptions, the killer in slasher films is overtly asexual, aside from the brief bouts of voyeurism that tend to precede the murders, and his/her gender is left ambiguous” (55). Rockoff’s comment is relevant in the sense that all the killers analyzed have their motivation for killing either associated to women or due to their “deviant”⁴³ sexuality.

Finally, the trope of the final girl is undoubtedly the major starting point for gender debate on slasher films. Because all final girls are represented as virginal and clever they stand for “good” girls who need to survive so that the natural order of gender is reestablished. On the contrary, all “bad” girls must die. They are depicted as deviant: they have “illicit” sex, do drugs and they are careless girls who contradict the gender norms imposed by society. The monster, however, seems to represent the patriarchal discourse which regulates women’s progressive praxis. The critic Roger Ebert cleverly summarizes the idea when he says in an interview that “with the advent of women’s liberation, man needed to find a way to tell women: Get back to your place women!”⁴⁴.

⁴²The issues of sexual identities and monstrosity as well as the figure of the final girl in *The Silence of the Lambs* is discussed in-depth in the chapter of filmic analysis of this dissertation.

⁴³I use quotation marks to connote a problematic discourse that is conveyed in the film, albeit not my own perception on the term.

⁴⁴In: Rockoff, Adam. DVD. *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of Slasher Films*, 2006.

CHAPTER III

Who is the Boogeyman in *Halloween*: The Viewer or the Monster?

“He has the devil’s eyes”
(Dr.Loomis, in *Halloween*)

Personally, writing about the film *Halloween* is a challenge to me. Because I am an aficionado of horror movies, especially the slasher breed, I feared “acting” like a fan, instead of an academic researcher. A fan in the sense that the film *Halloween* has become one of my favorite slasher films: in every get-together, such as a popcorn session with friends, I highly recommend *Halloween* as the best option available for the night. Since I decided to include an analysis of this film in my dissertation, the fear I aforementioned is not the terror the film might cause, but the one of becoming widely involved to the point of not perceiving so clearly, as an academic researcher, the concealed meanings the film might convey. Therefore, I realized that the movie impresses me both for its “entertainment appeal” as well as for its cinematic elements (point of view, cinematography, direction, soundtrack, mise-en-scène, props, just to name a few). Pat Gill in her article “The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family” (2002) illustrates my previous arguments when she states that

Halloween heralded a new subgenre of horror, the teen slasher film. Combining inventive violence and a clever, eerily evocative suburban mise-en-scène with engaging, believable, contemporary teen protagonists and a superhuman killer, director and co-writer John Carpenter created a new, effective type of film thriller. (Gill, 16)

Vera Dika in her work *Games of Terror* (1985) adds that
Carpenter has self-consciously assembled bits and pieces of already existing material and then reformulated them within a new textual system. The result is a precisely operating mechanism made up of simple oppositional units, which function to restate or underline certain existing ideological assumptions. (22)

Once the film is analyzed at a first look one can say it perfectly fits the standards of the slasher subgenre vis-a-vis the plot, the setting, and the gender associations between the killer/monster and the female characters (pivotal for the composition of this dissertation). Nonetheless, the magnitude of *Halloween* lies on the subversions it might bring up, especially what concerns to Clover's hypothesis of the progressive empowered final girl. Hence, it is one of my intentions, in this chapter, to unveil *Halloween*'s cloaked meanings throughout the signs it might encompass. In order to do so, I present an in-depth analysis of the selected movie scenes so as to show how the film contributes for a sharp investigation of the depiction of gender. To illuminate my arguments, I draw on the very influential works of Vera Dika's *Games of Terror* (1985), Carol Clover's psychoanalytic theory of the final girl in *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989), Laura Mulvey's article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975) and Pat Gill's insights on the slasher film in her article "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family" (2002).

Although having already presented a brief summary plot of the film in the introduction of this work, I find relevant to pinpoint some aspects of its synopsis in order to contextualize the film in this present chapter. I divide it in topics that apparently work individually, but eventually intertwine in the end: a) the film's origins and the author; b) the plot; 3) the setting; 4) the configurations between the monster and the female characters, 5) filmic analysis of selected scenes which depict gender representations.

Despite the criticism regarding its reductive and disreputable tone, not to mention its accusations of representations of misogyny and violence towards women, *Halloween* is undoubtedly a major success in the history of the slasher film. Among a variety of other films of the subgenre that followed it, *Halloween* is what the critic Roger Ebert called "the new brand of woman-in-danger" (in Williams, 31). The film's first concept came by the producer Irvin Yablans as the "Babysitter Murderers". Yablans in an interview for Adam Rockoff (2006) recalls his first idea for the movie about babysitters in danger. He says "Why not a babysitter movie? A babysitter in jeopardy, because everyone's either had a babysitter, been a babysitter, had children, you know everybody can relate to it" (55). The producer Yablans and the young director John Carpenter had already worked in *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976) which unexpectedly won a prize and became one of the highlights during the London Film Festival in 1977.

For this reason, Yablans reunites with Carpenter to produce one of the most rentable slasher films of the history of cinema. According to Rockoff, *Halloween* was produced for a paltry of US\$300,000 and grossed about \$50 million, over 150 times its production cost. The film's reception was undeniably outstanding even surpassing Hitchcock *Psycho*'s box office which was produced with the budget of approximately \$806,000 and grossed over \$50 million.⁴⁵ According to Vera Dika, *Halloween* "has the formidable distinction of having earned one of the largest proportional returns of any feature film in all of film history" (40). Even though the film had eventually grossed over an enormous sum in the box offices, it had initially been rejected by major studios who claimed that *Halloween* was merely an exploitation film⁴⁶. Unexpectedly, the film started to be acknowledged by significant film critics who claimed that *Halloween* is a major film classic⁴⁷ fit to stand alongside George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960)⁴⁸.

In addition, Dika partially praises the film major success due to Carpenter's promising career as a movie director. She writes that "It soon became clear that the film's success was not entirely an accident, and that Carpenter was a well-accomplished and very knowledgeable young man". Carpenter, at the age of 21, won an Academy Award for composing the music, editing, co-writing, and co-directing a live action short entitled, *The Resurrection of Bronco Billy*⁴⁹. He has already directed, co-written, scored soundtracks (for some of his own movies,) and produced a vast number of films. He is well-known for its artistry of working with particularly the science fiction and horror genre. Some of

⁴⁵ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054215/business>

⁴⁶ Rosenthal, op. cit., p. 52. (in: Dika, Vera. *Games Of Terror*, 1985, p.43)

⁴⁷ Even though other films have fit the standard of the slasher film such as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *Black Christmas* (1974), *Halloween* is undoubtedly the major representative of the slasher film due to its association with specific elements of the slasher subgenre, namely the monster, the locale and the final girl.

⁴⁸ Tom Allen "The Village Voice" (in: Dika, Vera. *Games of Terror*, 1985, p.44)

⁴⁹ (in: Dika, Vera. *Games of Terror*, 1985, p.45)

his major filmic productions are *Escape from New York* (1981); *The Thing* (1982) and *Christine* (1983), adapted from Stephen King's book of same name *Christine* (1983).

Let us now review the plot. John Carpenter's *Halloween* is the well-known story of Michael Myers, a mental institution fugitive who, at the age of six, brutally assassinates his teenage sister Judith after she has illicitly had sex with her boyfriend while her parents were away. Due to his crime, he is locked up in an asylum. Fifteen years after the killing, Michael escapes and returns to his hometown Haddonfield, Illinois, in the festive night of Halloween. During this period, he kills innocent teenagers who cross his path while he attempts to find the high school girl Laurie Strode (which we learn, in *Halloween II*, to be Michael's youngest sister. She had been adopted by another family after Judith Myer's murder).

During the credit sequence the film's tone is established by presenting a (boding evil) music that resembles frightening tracks of films of the same genre as well as it features a jack-o-lantern in the background. Another worth-mentioning aspect is that the name of the director John Carpenter⁵⁰ comes before the title, implying that the public already knows his work.

⁵⁰The director John Carpenter had already been acknowledge and awarded by some of his previous works, but it was with *Halloween* that he became notoriously famous, mainly by his artistry producing and directing horror films.



Figure 5: *Halloween*'s credit sequence already depicts the film's gloomy tone

3. 1. *Halloween*'s opening scene: The sister trouble

After that, it fades out to open the exhilarating opening sequence. It is Haddonfield, 1963, Illinois. A non-diegetic sound of little children performing a Halloween's chant is followed by the extra-diegetic music score which introduces us to the film narrative.

The narrative starts with a five minute-long take scene⁵¹ which shows, through a steadicam⁵², a watcher, in a subjective point of view camera, on "his" way to the entrance of a suburbia North-American house. The suburban mise-en-scène is accurately configured in order to build up the eerie atmosphere the narrative aims to convey. It is though

⁵¹ John Carpenter's *Halloween* initial scene has largely been compared to Orson Well's masterpiece *Touch of Evil* (1958) which presents in its opening a long shot scene of approximately four minutes similarly to *Halloween* which has six minutes.

⁵² The steadicam technique was invented by Garret Brown in 1971 and not only before John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) the use of the steadicam had been performed in a motion picture. After *Halloween*, Stanley Kubrick's well-known *The Shining* (1980) also makes use of this cinematic technique, especially in memorable scenes like the one with little boy Danny riding his tricycle in the enormous Overlook hotel's corridors.

in contradiction to the North-American ideal of suburban homes which usually stands for comfort, safety and respect to moral and family values, therefore Haddonfield cannot be the “home” for the massacre the city is about to experience. It is a dark night. The setting is a white, two-floor house with tall trees in front of a dingy porch. The wind substantially blows. Inside the house there is a teenager couple giggling (they are seen through the door’s glass). “My parents won’t be at home before ten,” says the teenage girl. Outside the house we observe the girl’s flirtation with her boyfriend (up to this moment the observer’s “real” identity has not been revealed yet). Because Judith’s parent are away one can say that this observer is perhaps Judith’s brother, as her boyfriend asks: “Are we alone?” “Michael is somewhere”- she replies. Besides that, it is implied that Judith was expected to be babysitting Michael while her parents were out. Conversely to her obligations, she rather prefers to date her boyfriend Bob. The observer before entering the house voyeuristically watches Judith and her boyfriend’s caresses on the sofa up to the moment they go upstairs to have sex.



Figure 6: The sequence of events that precede Judith’s murder

The lights inside of the house are all off. The observer has entered the house to grab a long butcher knife (the phallic prop already portrayed in the film poster) in the kitchen. He walks toward the dining room which has old candlesticks placed on the table. The furniture is ancient and made of wood. Suddenly, we hear the sound of a wall watch striking in the living room. It has an old sofa, a television and a rocking chair. The props in the house (the candlesticks, the watch on the wall, the rocking chair and the mask) might seem irrelevant at first, but eventually convey the idea that “we” are inside of the house as well as the construction of suspense followed by death. Besides that, the knife,

for instance, is of paramount importance to investigate the gender associations within the monster and his victims, especially the female ones.

According to Clover, as I mention in the previous section, the prop knife and other weapons are allegories for the male organ which stands for power, the phallus. Thus, their appropriation by women leads them to function as “phallic women” (and eventually “empowered”). The watcher is refrained by Bob’s presence while he is going down the stairs after he leaves Judith’s bedroom (putting his shirt on) to go home: “OK, OK, I will call you, I will! - he says. The observer climbs the stairs to enter a room to pick and eventually wear a child’s clown mask. He walks towards Judith’s bedroom to first gaze at her bare breasts while she is combing her hair and then at the bed the two lovers have had sex on. Because Judith senses someone’s presence she covers her breasts. She is then surprised by her young brother Michael who brutally stabs her to death. According to Dika, “The killing is a symbolic rape, and because we soon learn that Michael has killed his sister, it is also a symbolic act of incest”. (62)



Figure 7: The gaze which culminates in Judith’s death

However, not until Judith is deceased on the floor, a drop of blood is seen by the audience. Carpenter’s talent on suggesting more than actually showing recalls another famous death sequence which is the classic Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960). The innumerable shots that compose the cinematically acclaimed shower scene, from *Psycho*, have

been analyzed multiple times by scholars, film studies' theorists, and it has definitely paved the way to other films of the genre. Vera Dika, among a series of comparisons she establishes between the two films, argues that

The continuous, unattributed point of view shot at the beginning of *Halloween* provides a situation by which the viewer can share this look. And since the reverse shot of a specific character is missing, the viewer can see from the vantage point of the unknown character, figuratively occupying his position within the film's space while also being free of identification with that character's psychology. In this way, the viewer can simultaneously share a look with the killer and disavow his involvement in a manner more complete than is usually possible in narrative film. As the shot continues, however, we do learn an important fact about the fictionalized viewer. At first the camera had not appeared to be moving towards a specified goal. As it continues its trajectory, however, we realize that the object of our attention is a framed window on the front door of the house. Behind the window's drawn shade, a couple can be seen kissing in silhouette. Like *Psycho*, whose sexual action takes place behind a drawn shade (and behind which the camera had to penetrate in order for us to truly see the illicit couple), *Halloween* puts us in a peeping tom, or voyeuristic position regarding the depicted events. (54)

In a nutshell, the subjective point of view camera⁵³ forces us to identify with the monster. It allows the viewer to not simply eyewitness the events in *Halloween*, but to “see” them through Myers’ eyes and therefore, to mimic as the monster: we are inside the house, we turn on the lights, we wear the mask (it is Halloween’s night), we climb the stairs, we catch the knife, we gaze at the bed Judith has had sex with her boyfriend and at her bare breast while she combs her hair, and unfortunately we finally “kill” her. Yet, we only know “our” identity the moment the frightening music score announces who the “real” killer is.

⁵³The point of view camera (POV) is often attributed to slasher films, especially as to the monster/killer’s murderous actions.

Next, the camera switches to an objective point of view to show, in a mid shot, a six old year boy dressed up in a clown Halloween outfit holding a knife in his hand. Thus, “we” are belatedly revealed to ourselves, after committing a murder in the cinematic first person”, concludes (Clover 44).



Figure 8: “Our” identity and voyeuristic gaze is unveiled by Michael’s parents

Let us now debate on the key aspects described in the aforementioned sequences of *Halloween*. Firstly, I would like to comment on the cinematic subjective point of view attributed to Michael and how its configuration portrays problematic gender representations. As I mentioned before in the previous sections of this dissertation, the psychoanalytic work of Laura Mulvey (1975, 1981) on the male gaze has contributed to unveil the predominant patriarchal system in classic narrative Hollywood cinema. Her ideas do not directly relate to slasher films, yet they can perfectly be applied to the investigation I propose for selected scenes in *Halloween*. The first murder sequence thus is linked to two elements discussed by Mulvey: the three looks in cinema and the male gaze. The first look, that of the camera, registers the events

through Michael's eyes, there are thus no limits between "fiction" and the "real" world. The spectator/the subject (regardless of their gender), due to narrative conventions of subjective point of view camera, is obliged to identify with the male monster/killer (Michael). Consequently, the eye of the camera is both Michael's and ours.

Hence, once we engage in the film's narrative, there is no alternative rather than not to look through Myer's eyes. Besides that, we also voyeuristically observe Judith while she flirts with her boyfriend on the sofa as well as when she is half naked combing her hair. According to Mulvey, the gaze is a male position and is occupied by both male and female gender in *Halloween*.

Secondly, the fear of castration, part of the oedipal phase, systematizes a net of meanings on the psychosexual development of male subjectivity. On the symbolic stage, once the boy perceives the "lack" in the female organ he becomes extremely anxious by the possibility of having his male genitalia castrated. In the cinematic world, the only way to avoid his "castration" is to have women as objects of torture, pleasure and voyeurism. Therefore, Judith is merely objected to voyeuristic pleasure; she is the one who cannot see. On the contrary, she is to be looked at and eventually killed. According to Dika, it is

Judy's inability to see has marked her as guilty, and will be a major reason for her death. Not only is she having sex and shirking her babysitting duties by not "watching" her little brother, but she literally cannot see him standing outside the window. Most importantly, however, her character is not attributed the point of view shot that would reveal his presence. (65)

Thus, Judith is inserted in a complex patriarchal system which operates within *Halloween's* narrative. We, the audience, throughout the entire film are also part of the mechanism that imprisons woman in the look. Clover explains that

the sexes are what they seem; that screen males represent the Male and screen females the Female; that this identification along gender lines authorizes impulses toward sexual violence in males and encourages impulses toward victimization in females. In part because of the massive authority cinema by

nature accords the image, even academic film criticism has been slow- slower than literary criticism-to get beyond appearances. Film may not appropriate the mind's eye, but it certainly encroaches on it; the gender characteristics of a screen figure are a visible and audible given for the duration of the film. To the extent that the possibility of cross-gender identification has been entertained, it has been in the direction female-with-male. Thus some critics have wondered whether the female viewer, faced with the screen image of a masochistic/narcissistic female, might not rather elect to "betray her sex and identify with the masculine point of view (41).

The female "betrayal" informed by Clover is apparent in *Halloween*. Male audiences "kill" female bodies and so do women.

3.2. The boogeyman and women

Michael Myers psychosexual fury, the core of the film narrative, is initially presented to the viewer in the beginning of the film. Another example of that is Michael's constant obsession by the female sex. It is corroborated in the sequence in which his psychiatrist returns to the mental institution to try to find the possible reasons for Michael's escape. Inside Michael's door room the female noun "sister" is written with a prop (a sharp tool). The word is liable to function as a sign of his sex/gender obsession that starts with Judith's murder and continues with the ruthless chase against his youngest sister, the final girl, (the survivor) Laurie.

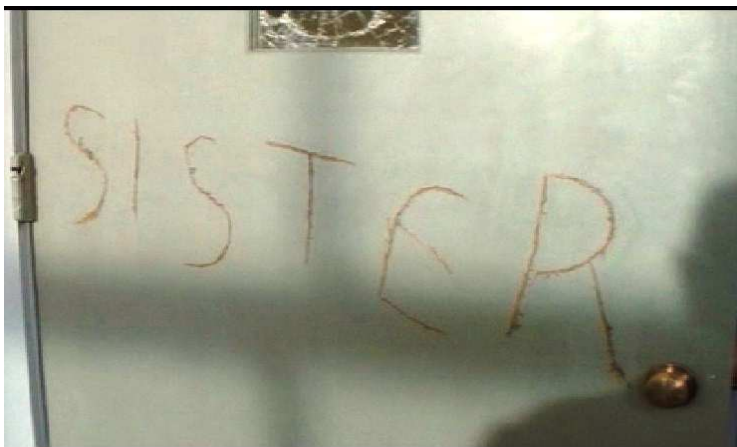


Figure 9: The word “sister” expresses Michael’s anger towards women

Nevertheless, Michael’s fury is not exclusively associated to his sisters. He kills everyone who crosses his way, including men. Undoubtedly, all teenagers who die are engaged in some sexual activity since “killing those who seek or engage in unauthorized sex amounts to a generic imperative of the slasher film. It is an imperative that crosses gender lines, affecting males as well as females” (Clover 76). Clover expands her argument stating that

men and boys who go after "wrong" sex also die. This is not the only way males die; they also die incidentally, as girls do, when they get in the killer's way or try to stop him, or when they stray into proscribed territory. The victims of *Hell Night*, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, and the *Friday the Thirteenth* films are, respectively, those who trespass in Garth Manor, those who stumble into the environs of the slaughterhouse family, and those who become counselors at a cursed camp, all without regard to sex. Boys die, in short, not because they are boys but because they make mistakes. Some girls die for the same mistakes. Others, however, and always the main one,

die-plot after plot develops the motive-because they are female. Michael's sexual anger toward his sister (in the *Halloween* series) drives him to kill her-and after her a string of sister surrogates (90).

Regarding to gender issues, the amount of deaths in *Halloween* is unequal. Gender thus plays an important role in the representation of murder throughout the narrative, women unquestionably die more (and differently) than men. There are four murders in the film: Michael's sister Judith, Annie, Lynda and her boyfriend Bob. Annie is Laurie's friend and confidant. However, unlike Laurie, she is carefree and does not hesitate to engage in illicit acts such as doing drugs and having sex, instead of babysitting the child she is responsible for (Lindsey). In a particular sequence, Annie and Laurie are on their way to work. They are both going to babysit during Halloween night (Laurie is babysitting the boy Tommy). However, Annie has other plans: she wants to leave the young girl under Laurie's care so that she can have sex with her boyfriend (Paul).

The events that anticipate Annie's death are certainly not free from gender troubles. She is portrayed as the personification of the "bad" girl and, therefore, the film narrative's configuration seems to force the viewer not to identify with her. Annie herself recognizes that by saying "I am the only person in the world this dog does not like" (the dog enters the kitchen and ferociously barks at her while she is in the kitchen making a phone call to her boyfriend). Cinematic elements such as editing thus play an important role on portraying Annie as the outsider who needs to be the first dispatched from the narrative. She is regulated by the dog which functions as an allegory for Annie's "disturbing" presence (dogs usually bark at strangers or whom they sense a certain kind of danger). After that, she is killed by Myers while she is on her way to collect her boyfriend in his house. Michael Myers is inside the car waiting for her, and the scene culminates with her violent murder leaving Annie with no other alternative rather than being strangled and stabbed to death.



Figure 10: Annie's recklessness and sexual interest lead her to death

Likewise her high school friend Annie, Lynda is also another female victim of Michael Myers. Annie dies before having sexual intercourse with her boyfriend whereas Lynda dies right after she has had sex with her partner. The sequence of events that precede Linda's death first show her and Bob drinking beer (inside his car) in front of Lindsey's house. Lynda and Bob break into the house (there is nobody at home. Annie had left Lindsey in Tommy's house so that she could meet her boyfriend) in order to have sex. After having had sex in the main bedroom, Bob goes downstairs to get more beer while Linda waits in bed. The following sequence shows, in low-key lighting, Bob inside the dark kitchen fetching some beer. While Bob walks back to the bedroom, Michael surprises him stabbing him on his chest to death. Thus, one can say that Bob's death is surely less brutal than Annie's. First, Bob is rapidly dispatched by Meyers, contrary to Annie that agonizes in pain being suffocated and having her throat cut. Second, the sequence of events that follow Annie's death suggests to the viewer that she is the "bad" girl whose death suits her well.

After having killed Bob, Myers shows up in the main bedroom dressed up like a ghost pretending to be Bob (wearing white sheets and Bob's glasses). Michael enters the room and Lynda nags about his delay. However, Myers is unresponsive to Lynda's complaints which annoys her "OK, if you do not want to answer me, I am gonna call Laurie". While she is on the phone, semi-nude, the camera is framed, in

a medium close-up so that the viewer initially sees part of her breasts. Such scene suggests the idea that women are to be looked at and, thus the object of the gaze. As Michael strangles her to death with the telephone's wire, her breasts are fully exposed on the screen. Interestingly enough, none of Bob's body parts are exposed to the viewer while he is being killed. Thus, his death seems to be lesser a spectacle which links sexual elements and death.



Figure 11: Bob's death motif seems unequal in comparison to Linda's brutal murder

To sum up, in *Halloween*, except for Laurie, women are susceptible to death due to their recklessness motivated by sexual practices. In this sense, the monster Michael functions as a regulator to establish social order and the moral values which are representative of Haddonfield suburbia. "Do you know what Haddonfield is? This is a family suburb, these things do not happen here" — says the Sheriff in response to Dr. Loomis concerns about Michael's return to the town. Besides being a regulator, Michael wishes to kill Laurie even though she incorporates all there is to being a good girl. She is clever, she is not breaking any rule inflicted by the patriarchy, plus, she takes good care of the children. Such scenario implies that there is no way out for women in the narrative.

Regarding the other characters, one might state that the figure of the kids stand for purity (not differently than common thought that usually links children to purity). For this reason, Michael is not even a

threat to them. No violent acts are inflicted upon Lindsey and Tommy. In the final scene, Michael is inside Tommy's house chasing Laurie. The kids, however, are able to leave the house. They eventually find Dr Loomis, who rapidly assists Laurie by subduing her ruthless aggressor. In other words, both the kids and Dr. Loomis are signs which represent Laurie's salvation, respectively purity and male agency. Therefore, she is not empowered or progressive as Clover suggests⁵⁴.

After finding all of her friends' corpses, Laurie is chased by Michael for about twenty five minutes. She is terrified, stabbed, pushed down the stairs, but not killed. The final girl is clever enough to almost lure the killer. She stabs him with a long butcher knife, hurts his eyes with a weapon she makes out of a hanger (while she hides from him in the closet). For a moment, Laurie believes she finally downs him, yet due to his monstrous "superhuman" feature, he is far from being defeated. Finally, after being rescued by Dr. Loomis, who attempts to kill Michael with several gunshots, she rapidly descends into a catatonia (or hysteria) state revealing her actual frailty.



Figure 12: The Final Girl fights against death for twenty five minutes in the last scene of *Halloween*

⁵⁴ The idea of the empowered final girl is discussed in the previous chapter of this study.

Laurie is the final girl. She is the lone survivor of Michael's attacks. Contrary to her peers she does not conform to a certain extent of social and cultural pre established gender norms. She is not the personification of a "feminine" woman. Thus, her characterization does not convey the stereotypical figure of the sensual woman who seeks sexual encounters (mainly depicted on Annie and Lynda's characters). Laurie's clothes are though "unattractive" and her interest in dating men is rather less evident than in the other girls (which becomes the reason of her friends' teases): "I can't, I can't go to the prom. You can do these things, not me," says Laurie to Annie. "Come on, tell me. Which guy do you think attractive?" asks Annie. "Ben, Ben," replies Laurie. "I did not know you thought about that," says Annie, surprised by Laurie's answer.

The dialogue between them conveys Laurie's constant denial of her sexuality and how the other girls recognize the fact she is sexually inactive. Based on that, I would like to raise the following questions:

- 1) Is Laurie the final girl, the one who survives because she does not personify the norms imposed by her gender?
- 2) Do women die in *Halloween* solely because they are women?
- 3) Is the final girl an alter ego of the monster, since the narrative seems to depict both Laurie and Michael as sexually frustrated?

On the one hand, Clover seems to agree with the idea that the final girl endures in the narrative due to her ambiguous gender performance. In other words, according to stereotypical discursive practices, the biological sex is believed to determine the way one should behave. Laurie does not symbolically embody the female gender, she is though androgynous. For Clover,

The gender of the Final Girl is likewise compromised from the outset by her masculine interests, her inevitable sexual reluctance (penetration, it seems, constructs the female), her apartness from other girls, sometimes her name. At the level of the cinematic apparatus, her unfemininity is signaled clearly by her exercise of the "active investigating gaze" normally reserved for males and hideously punished in females when they assume it themselves; tentatively

at first and then aggressively, the Final Girl looks for the killer, even tracking him to his forest hut or his underground labyrinth, and then at him, therewith bringing him, often for the first time, into our vision as well (66).

On the other hand, *Halloween*'s director John Carpenter believes the motif of Laurie's survival lies on the grounds of sexual repression rather than gender inconformity. He thinks that

They [the critics] completely missed the boat there, I think. Because if you turn it around, the one girl who is the most sexually uptight just keeps stabbing this guy with a long knife. She's the most sexually frustrated. She's the one that killed him. Not because she's a virgin, but because all that repressed energy starts coming out. She uses all those phallic symbols on the guy.... She and the killer have a certain link: sexual repression ⁵⁵.

A third author brings up into debate that in *Halloween* family moral values outweigh gender issues. For Gill,

Laurie is not depicted as sexually ambiguous; her moral attributes, however, are shown to be as important as her physical ones. The sexual activity of her friends serves as one more indication of their giddy, thoughtless natures, suggesting not that Laurie is sexually repressed, but that her friends have no proper sense of hierarchy, no responsibility to themselves or others. The final person

⁵⁵In: Clover, 68

in slasher films does not so much bend gender as age, somehow gathering into her or his character the maturity and responsibility missing in the adults (23).

All arguments are feasible in the sense that both the monster characterization as well as the relationship between the killer and the final girl is not a straightforward process of analysis. It is though a complex mechanism that suggests more than elucidates any possibility of resolution. However, one can argue that gender investigation is a paramount tool to problematize such association.

CHAPTER IV

The Dangerous Triangle in *The Silence of the Lambs*: Queer Bill, Cannibal Lecter and the Starling Final Girl

“You wouldn’t want Lecter in your mind”
(Jack Crawford in *The Silence of the Lambs*)

The film *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) is unquestionably a major commercial success in the history of Hollywood film industry. It has won, along with the films *It Happened One Night* (1934), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), the big five main Oscars, (which honor the great achievements of the year) , namely Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. The film has been adapted from the book of same title *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and it is the second of four⁵⁶ novels by Thomas Harris which depict the iconic characters Clarice Starling, Buffalo Bill and Hannibal Lecter. The first novel, *Red Dragon* (1981), tells the story of a retired FBI agent who gets aid from the ex-psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter in order to capture a serial killer nicknamed The Tooth Fairy. Similarly⁵⁷ to the film I analyze in this chapter, the novel *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) is about the FBI cadet Clarice Starling and her peculiar liaison with Lecter. *Hannibal* (1999) narrates the story of the cannibalistic psychiatrist, after he has escaped prison and his eventual encounter with Clarice Starling. Finally, the prequel to the three other books, *Hannibal Rising* (2006), is about Hannibal’s background, such as his trajectory as a psychiatrist and eventually as a cannibal killer.

However, the story behind the scenes of *The Silence of the Lambs* seemed to have been different than the glamorous awards the film won. The *Silence of the Lambs* was distributed in the theaters by

⁵⁶Besides *The Silence of the Lambs*, all the other three books have been adapted to cinema: *Red Dragon*(2002), *Hannibal*(2001) and *Hannibal Rising* (2007)

⁵⁷Because the filmic text is the main object of study, I shall not pose in this doctoral dissertation the issue of fidelity in adaptation. This issue has largely been discussed among a variety of scholars, including the well-known work of Andre Bazin’s namely “Adaptation or Cinema as Digest”. (in : Naremore, 2000)

the Orion Pictures Studio which was undoubtedly on the verge of bankruptcy⁵⁸. A considerable number of news suggested that the so-called “artistry” of *The Silence of the Lambs* that presumably led the film to win the big main five awards might have been connected to the fact of economics. In other words, the fruits of the victorious’ Oscar night for *The Silence of the Lambs* was likely to be an attempt to provide financial aid to the studio’s emergent failure. Besides that, I would like to highlight that a film’s magnitude should not be acknowledge for the number of awards it might eventually wins, especially considering the fact that the so-called “Academy Awards” is extremely associated to an industry of films which has predominantly privileged commercial mainstream films mainly associated to their profitable performances on the box offices⁵⁹. *The Silence of the Lambs*, even though presenting an aura of an independent film⁶⁰ and having been rejected by many studios due to its violent tone⁶¹, it is a traditional cinematic production (both in form and content). Both leading roles Jodie Foster (Clarice Starling) and Sir⁶² Anthony Hopkins (Hannibal Lecter) were, at that time, even

⁵⁸ See in : http://articles.latimes.com/1992-04-01/news/mn-103_1_oscar-sweep
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0102926/trivia>
http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1992-04-12/entertainment/9202020545_1_silence-director-jonathan-demme-oscars-john-kluge

⁵⁹*The Silence of the Lambs*’ production budget was U\$ \$19 million and its worldwide gross was U\$272,742,922. See in : <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=silenceofthelambs.htm>

⁶⁰ An independent film is usually attributed to its low budget and production outside the major studios.

⁶¹ The famous actor Gene Hackman refused to direct the film as well as the well-known Hollywood actress Michelle Pfeiffer to act as the leading role of the FBI trainee Clarice Starling due to the film’s distasteful violent scenes. See in : *The Silence of the Lambs* mini documentary featured on the film’s DVD

⁶² The Queen Elizabeth chooses among a variety of men and women to become members of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and eventually grant them with the title of Sir or Dame. Some other famous public figures

though for distinct reasons, well-known actors acknowledged by their prestige: Foster had already won an Oscar for her leading role in the film *The Accused* (1988) and Hopkins had already been acknowledged for his distinguished work as a theater actor in *Whales and England*.

Having presented an overview on the film *The Silence of the Lambs* regarding the context of its awards and adaptation, I shall move to the analysis of the film in light of gender, queer and film studies. To do so, I must consider the key aspects I develop throughout this chapter. They are as it follows:

1) The characteristics that make up the triangle (Starling, Lecter and Bill). First, each character's features are presented separately. Then, I investigate how the characters relate to each other, and then how these "characteristics" relate to the narrative development of the film as a whole;

2) The argument about the final girl trope in slasher films and how it can be identified in the character of Clarice Starling. Besides that, I think about the way Clarice fits both into that pattern, but also how she functions as a detective (either through intelligence or violence);

3) The way that my argument leads on to broader questions of gender, sexuality and the question of queerness (Mulvey, 1975&1981, Eve Sedgwick, 1990; Judith Butler, 1993, Judith Halberstam, 1995) as well as representation (Nelmes, 2003). In order to support these ideas, I also raise the following questions:

3a) What does the film imply about gender relations?

3b) Where does the film stand ideologically in terms of the queer stereotypes it deals with?

3c) How was the film's reception⁶³? And, more specifically, how was it received by the gay community?

to hold the title are: the actor Roger Moore, the actor Sean Connery and the actress Judy Dench, among others.

⁶³Even though it is not my intention to work with Reception Theory I raise this question in order to contextualize the issue of Bill's characterization as queer associated to violence. Janet Staiger has presented a consistent work on Reception Theory in *Perverse Spectators* (2000). She has written a specific article regarding reception theory on *The Silence of the Lambs* "Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of *The Silence of the Lambs*".

4) An in-depth investigation on questions of mise-en-scène and the portrayal of the characters, but also elements of style, such as lighting, camera angles, editing and characterization, just to name a few.

4.1. The triangle in *The Silence of the Lambs*

In the triangle lived by Bill, Lecter and Starling, even though Lecter is deprived of his liberty, he is the one who conveys more power in the relationship. Starling is portrayed as a FBI trainee tormented by her past experiences. Bill is also a very fragile female that is “trapped” into a male’s body. His incapacity of being “transformed” into a woman seems to be, in the narrative, the main reason he skins and eventually kills (large) women.

In the first of a series of encounters Clarice has with Lecter, she attempts to interview him in order to dig up information for his profile. However, instead of giving her answers, he manipulates the inquiry and ends up verbally harassing Clarice. The following passage illustrates how Hannibal manages to subjugate her:

You're so ambitious, aren't you...? You know what you look like to me, with your good bag and your cheap shoes? You look like a rube. A well-scrubbed, hustling rube with a little taste... Good nutrition has given you some length of bone, but you're not more than one generation from poor white trash, are you Officer Starling...? That accent you're trying so desperately to shed - pure West Virginia. What was your father, dear? Was he a coal miner? Did he stink of the lamp...? And oh, how quickly the boys found you! All those tedious, sticky fumbblings, in the back seats of cars, while you could only dream of getting out. Getting anywhere - yes? Getting all the way - to the FBI.

Lecter’s reference to Sterling’s discovery of her sexuality as “tedious” (“And oh, how quickly the boys found you!”), might infer the desire Clarice had to escape from male supremacy. She wanted instead to get empowered “Getting all the way- to the FBI”. Lecter throughout the narrative teases Clarice regarding her sexuality. “Getting all the way

to the FBI”, for example, seems to connote the idea of sexual penetration. Interestingly enough is the scene that follows the one in which Lecter first mentions about her sexuality. Clarice is leaving Lecter’s cell when a prisoner (Miggs) starts to whisper unidentifiable words so that Clarice stops in front of his cell. He is though masturbating and such act culminates in Miggs throwing sperm on Clarice’s face. The sperm seems also to symbolize Clarice’s subjectivity associated to her absent sexual activity. Finally, in the last scene of the sequence Clarice is alone in the prison’s parking lot recalling her joyful childhood moments with her deceased father. Hence, what comes to the surface in the film narrative, through the cinematic element of editing, is that Clarice’s subjectivity as well as her sexuality is linked to the figure of her father (which I comment in the next two paragraphs) as well as to the other male characters.

The FBI might thus have a twofold function in Clarice’s characterization. The first is the one which embodies her so-called female power through intelligence and violence (she might be able as a detective to gain power through her cleverness as well as the use of violence), yet the second stands for her symbolic associations (but not sexual) with male figures throughout the narrative.

The first (and most significant) male figure in Clarice’s life is her father. In another conversation with Lecter, she expresses how important her father is to her subjectivity: “After my mother died, my father had become the whole world to me, and when he left I had nothing”- she says. Since Clarice lost her beloved father at a young age she ended up living with some relatives in a sheep and horses farm. Because of the pain inflicted by her loss and her feeling of displacement, Clarice ran away from the ranch. Hence, one can say that the absence of Clarice male figure triggered her to be a FBI agent (she has her father as a role model).

However, I shall emphasize that all psychological content the film provides is part of its narrative system. It seems to employ psychology to lure the audience and, most of all, make the viewer identify with the melodramatic aspects of Clarice’s character. Thus, as a film studies researcher, I intend to go beyond the narrative events portrayed on the screen by investigating how such psychology depicted in the film is far less intelligent than the one utilized by Mulvey as a tool of unveiling the patriarchal system of classical Hollywood cinema. That one of the narrative, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, seems, on the contrary, to entrap Clarice in the male supremacy she presumably should be fighting against.

Moreover, Clarice's gender position as a woman is reduced to Lecter's male supremacy. Even though being insulted by Lecter, Clarice is believed to be brave enough to return to interview the cannibalistic psychiatrist. She desperately wants to prove herself that she is able to overcome her tormented past and her "gender" inferiority (symbolized by the lambs that keep screaming for help⁶⁴) by saving Buffalo Bill's ultimate victim. However, what Clarice does not know is that due to the fact she is a woman (in a man's world of the FBI) she is been used by her FBI guru Jack Crawford (Scott Glenn) to serve as bait to turn Lecter on so that he delivers information on the Buffalo Bill's case. Lecter instead demands Clarice to play a game with him in return of information on the serial killer's profile. He plays a cat and mouse game with Clarice (the quid pro quo⁶⁵) that places her in an inferior position over him. Lecter's charming and clever figure frightens and excites Clarice at the same measure. Therefore, she gives in Lecter's psychological game, which brings to the surface the inner aspects of her subjectivity: "Why did you run away from the ranch, Clarice? "Did the rancher oblige you to perform fellatio or sodomize you?" — says Lecter to Clarice. "He was a very decent man", replies Clarice in disagreement. However, being a "decent" man is not a recurrent praxis in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Except for Clarice's father, who is portrayed as a diligent police officer (he is almost like a hero for Clarice, he was killed trying to stop burglars to rob a convenience store in the local community), all the other men in the film are somewhat subversive.

⁶⁴ Clarice tells Lecter that in the morning she ran away she could hear the lambs screaming. In an attempt to save them of their agony she is able to only carry one with her, though she fails to keep her journey with the animal due to its excessive size. I relate the lamb as a sign of Clarice's own agony as woman trapped in a man's world. Her trajectory in the FBI does not seem to "free" her from hearing the lambs screaming. On the contrary, she is manipulated by Lecter, who entertains playing his psychological game with her, even though he "allows" her to live in the end of the narrative.

⁶⁵ Definition of "quid pro quo": New Latin, something for something. Something given or received for something else; also: a deal arranging a quid pro quo (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary : <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quid%20pro%20quo>)

4.2. The Starling Final Girl

The film *The Silence of the Lambs* is not precisely associated to the slasher subgenre. It is though classified as a psychological horror film. However, the relationship between Clarice Starling and the two main male characters Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) and Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine) configures in the narrative the relevant trope of the final girl depicted in slasher films. Clarice might not fully resemble Laurie Strode, the final girl from *Halloween*, yet she personifies some of the peculiarities which build Laurie's characterization as the lone survivor. Not unlike Laurie, Clarice is a clever woman who needs to fight a "monster" in the end of the narrative, as she is in charge to stop the feared serial killer Buffalo Bill. Nevertheless, Clarice is not captured by the murderer like the other victims, she does not fit Buffalo victims' standards since he only kills overweight girls in order to flay them. However, due to her cleverness, Clarice finds Bill's "slaughterhouse" and winds up being in confrontation with the "monster". The final scene recalls slasher films' endings, in which the final girl (and the "audience," through Clarice's "eyes") needs to down the aggressor after having experienced fear, torture and pain. In the narrative, Clarice's agony is portrayed by low key lighting which expresses her fragility and panic, since Bill, after being identified by Clarice, manages to escape and hide in his own house (the horror labyrinth he keeps his victims). Bill thus turns off the lights so that he can easily hunt Clarice. We, the viewers, see through his eyes (he has the same night vision binocular he uses to catch his victims). After a hide and seek game in the dark with Bill, Clarice finally defeats him by shooting him to death. Besides that, she is able to save Bill's victim who had been kept inside a dingy well. However, although being perceived as a female heroine, Clarice's triumph is only achieved through male intervention. She is able to capture Bill due to Lecter's aid; she is the woman who has been controlled all the time by the sick mind of the (other) monster, Hannibal Lecter.

Regarding Lecter and Bill, one might say they do not have the same superhuman nature such as Michael Myers (*Halloween*) and various other monsters in slasher and horror films (Jason in *Friday the 13th*, 1981, Chucky⁶⁶ in *Child's Play*, 1989, among others). They are

⁶⁶*Child's Play* tells the story of a deceased murderer who after a satanic ritual returns to life in the body of Chucky, a toy which eventually starts killing people in a gruesome fashion.

however “human monsters”(serial killers), “regular people” that can be social participants of daily life activities⁶⁷(like most serial killers) and more than that, they can be killed by “human” intervention. Lecter is a former psychiatrist, known now as Hannibal, The Cannibal (for his “distinctive” practice of eating human flesh). Bill does not, in the literal sense of the word, eat human flesh, but to a certain extent he is similar to Lecter, since both share a fascination for the human body. For them, the body is the component of their deviant practices (either to eat or remove parts of it). For Bill, the body has double connotation in his subjectivity. He needs the skin (the superficial part of a human’s body) in order to build a “new” body for himself. Judith Halberstam, in her work *Skin Shows*, argues that “Monsters are meaning machines. They can represent gender, race, nationality, class and sexuality in one body” (22). Even though pertaining to the sex definition as a man, Bill does not identify himself as such. After being denied by the government to undergo sex change surgery, Bill becomes a serial killer (recalling the North-American serial killer Ed Gein who, after killing his own mother, became one feared killer that skinned his victims to cover parts of his house’s furniture).⁶⁸

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, the characterization of Clarice Starling is noticeably defined by the rules of patriarchal norms. Thus, editing plays an important role (especially in the first scenes of the film) to convey such representation of Clarice’s subservience to patriarchy. We can thus define two key aspects regarding Clarice to male characters within the diegesis. First, Clarice’s torments as a child began after her father had died. Throughout the film, we understand that the relation daughter/father is paramount to the meanings permeating her character.

In the opening sequence, after a hard training in the woods, Clarice is told by a FBI agent to meet one of her superiors. On her way

⁶⁷ The issue of “real life” and fiction has already been problematized in the previous sections of this doctoral dissertation.

⁶⁸ Ed Gein was a serial killer who besides killing two people during the 1950s had the practice to collect human bones from exhumed bodies from graveyards. The figure of the serial killer Ed Gein has been widely been portrayed in cinema throughout the years. An example of that is the two extremely acknowledged s characters Norman Bates from Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) and Leatherface from Tobe Hopper’s slasher film *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974)

to meet with him she takes a lift, with only men inside. This sequence seems irrelevant, but when its *mise-en-scène* is analyzed more carefully it becomes prominent in order to bring up general questions regarding gender identity and sexuality. She is the only woman on the elevator, which conveys her distinctive position as a woman in the FBI academy (we only learn about one more woman who is Clarice's classmate). Men gaze at her, as her lesser position is confirmed by the camera angle that frames her in midst of the male group while one of them gazes at her in dissatisfaction.



Figure 13: Clarice in a man's world

In another sequence, Clarice is with her FBI superior in order to investigate a former Bill's victim who was found dead in a small town. In the room where the body is to be analyzed there are several town marshals that resist the fact Clarice is in charge of the investigations. Such fact seems curious due to the fact that FBI agents (surely men) have usually been portrayed in films like the uncontestable powerful

force in the hierarchy of police. The town marshals are though only regional police officers. In this sense, their characterization of the town marshals in contrast to the FBI agents is worth-commenting. The marshal's resemble interior men. They wear cheap chino pants and inelegant hats, whereas FBI agents wear suits. Marshals drive police officer's cars while the FBI agents arrive in the small town in a private airplane. However, if the dichotomy would have been only to stand for the differences between superiority among police systems, the problem would be of less concern. Obviously, the estrangement men feel when they realize Clarice (a woman) is responsible for the investigation, symbolizes the hegemonic masculinity which, unfortunately, still seems to dominate discursive and social practices.

Such gender inequality is confirmed by Clarice's tutor Crawford as he says "The type of sex crime has certain aspects I'd just as soon discuss in private(not in front of a woman⁶⁹), know what I mean" (he looks immediately at Clarice who feels uncomfortable with the situation).

In other words, the aforementioned scenario conveys the patriarchal social and cultural praxis which (dis)empowers women. My hypothesis is thus that Sterling does not meet the characterization of Carol Clover's theory of the progressive final girl as she is controlled by the male figures of Lecter and Bill (and so by her tutor Crawford: he used her as a bait to attract Lecter and he also conforms to gender norms of patriarchy represented, in the narrative, by his powerful figure inside the FBI).

⁶⁹ My addition



Figure 14: Gender Trouble: Clarice is again positioned as inferior in this representation of a patriarchal mise-en-scène.

The film *The Silence the Lambs* has presented much controversy since its release in 1991. Many are the issues regarding both its production and themes. Theorist Judith Halberstam has said that *The Silence of the Lambs* “has cannibalized the [horror] genre, consumed its bones and all and reproduced it in a slick and glossy representation of representations of violence, murder, mutilation, matricide, and the perverse consequences of gender confusion”(163). In this context, both literary and filmic texts are important sources of representation to the study of gender and queer questions. Both media, offer a variety of depictions of sexual identities and characters of a particular cultural moment. However, like in the two films I select for my investigation meaning might be neatly hidden.

Moreover, language has to be in context; it is its meanings and symbols expressed in a text that form a certain value judgment in a determined community or society. For instance, as horror films have been said to be usually male oriented (Clover, 43), a certain gender representation in those films might have a way more extensive effect in the thoughts/behavior of a male community, but the “physical” biased outcomes of such manners of thinking will be affecting a broader part of the society. In other words, prejudice is spread throughout and in language. Therefore the repetition of biased discourse is the cause of the

objectification of women or/and biased images of gays, lesbians, black people and other minoritarian groups.

Furthermore, Chris Jones states that the identification with a given representation is strongly connected to a cultural environment. The representation of a class, race or sexual orientation, for instance, is the way our identity is culturally perceived and how its subjects are interpellated day by day by established dominant groups such as straight, white, men, just to name a few. For Jones,

Representation is a social process which occurs in the interactions between a reader or viewer in a text. It produces signs which reflect underlying sets of ideas and attitudes. An integral part of the process of reading a film is the use of stereotyping, the depiction of characters according to their perceived membership of a certain social group such as Asians, mothers in law, businessman, lesbians. This is a form of shorthand; a few visual or sound cues give the audience a view of a certain type of person which is widely accepted the nature of this view is generally shaped by the dominant groups in a society (in: Nemes 258).

In other words, he argues that the matter of representation deals with the process of identification connected to the place of enunciation of the message receiver (reader/audience). For instance, social class and gender positioning have to take into account the process of representation/identification of a certain group⁷⁰.

Much has been debated about the queer/gender characterizations presented in *Silence of the Lambs*. The critic and journalist, Michelangelo Signorile in his work *Queer in America* (1993) presents a consistent review of the aspects of queer and gender characterizations that permeate Buffalo Bill's iconography. He comments on the attacks he suffered from gays and lesbian writers due to his argument defending Jonathan Demme's film from accusations of homophobic or biased representation. Regarding Signorelli's viewpoint

⁷⁰This issue has been widely theorized, not only in the area of Reception Studies proper, as in Post-Colonial Studies, Masculinities, among others.

one can say that what the film, and most of the cinematic elements in the film express in conjunction to a historical cinema manner of portraying lesbians, gays and women in films(as vampires, serial killers, monster, the wicked boss and so forth) as deviant figures.

In *Basic Instinct*, (1992), directed by Paul Verhoeven, for instance, Sharon Stone plays Catherine Trammel, a seducing woman who is accused of murder and sometimes has lesbian relationships. The polemic film *Cruising* (1980), directed by William Friedkin *tells* the story of a serial killer who kills gay people⁷¹. Thus, according to that possible pattern, in *The Silence of the Lambs* Buffalo Bill is a “gay” man and a serial killer who brutally kills several women.

Buffalo Bill's identity in the film, however, is more problematic. He/she is a male who perceives himself as a “woman”. Bill's characterization conveys the idea of his gender fluidity. He does not accept his male organ and wishes to undergo surgery for a sex change. However, Buffalo Bill's gender identity is, in the filmic version, associated with violence and excess. Recalling Linda Williams in her article “*Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess*”, the horror genre is considered to present a particular system of gratuitous excess and violence having no other logic but to produce excitement in the bodies of the spectators. She argues violent scenes in the diegesis produce in the spectators' bodies' sensations which connects to what they are watching on the screen. In other words, for Williams there is a system of excess that operates between the audience and the film. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, excess is worth commenting as the character of Buffalo Bill and Hannibal Lecter are conveyed in the narrative as deviant.

4.3. Queer Bill

Bill's portrayal of his sexuality is depicted in the mis-en-scène. The setting is Bill's room permeated with red vivid colors, props such as disco balls and several female mannequins. Disco balls recall the era of

⁷¹The film reception by the gay community was remarkably negative.

People would go in front of movie theaters to protest in order to stop the screening of the film.

disco music, during the 1970s, which has constantly been associated to the gay club subculture. Besides that, the lively and vivid colors of his bedroom express glee and excitement, but it is opposed to Bill's criminal figure throughout the narrative (he skins women). This atmosphere does cause a certain sort of estrangement. Thus, the cinematic element of editing plays an important role in this sequence. The colorful scenario shows Bill as a transvestite man. Because he does not identify with his "male" body he pretends having a vagina by hiding his penis between his legs. In Halberstam words,

Bill is not reducible to 'homosexual' or 'transsexual'. He is indeed a man at odds with gender identity or sexual identity and his self-presentation is a confused mosaic of signifiers. He is imitating gender, exaggerating gender, and finally attempting to shed his gender in favor of a new skin. Buffalo Bill is prey to the most virulent conditioning heterosexist culture has to offer — he believes anatomy is destiny (167)



Figure 15: Bodies that Matter: Buffalo hides his penis in order to perform as a woman while her victim cries for help.

Thus, the viewer hardly identifies with Bill's characterization due to his association with violence and the likely subsequent death of "his" victim. Hence, the combination of the mis-en-scène and editing plays an important role in the depiction of a biased symbol of excess and violence. The excess is Bill's transformation into a woman, which is not shown on the screen, but is in the minds of the audience functioning as a mental process of representation (Hall, 14) through cinematic tools of props, editing (Buffalo's scene as a "transvestite" is followed by her victim's agony), characterization and mise-en-scène.

By saying that, one might infer that it is prominent the direct association with violence and the excessive portrayal of Bill's filmic characterization. Unfortunately such depiction serves as a means to reinforce the biased image gays, lesbians and other minoritarian groups have in media as well as in "real life".



Figure 16: Bill's victim tries to survive while Bill builds his new "skin"

Nevertheless, the aforementioned scene is not present in the book. Bill's characterization is explored through his tormented childhood at the hands of a violent mother who had abandoned him. It thus seems, in the novel, to be the reason Bill kills women (likewise the film, the novel utilizes plain psychology to explain that because Bill has an oedipal relationship with his mother, his psychosexual fury is towards the female gender). After having killed his foster parents, Buffalo starts to kill several women as "All of Buffalo Bill's victims were women, his obsession was women, he lived to hunt women. Not one woman investigator had looked at every one of his crimes." (Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs*, p.108)".

Judith Butler, in her work *Bodies that Matter* (1993) discusses the concept of queer identity in relation to the so-called categories of gender/sex/sexuality. In the introduction, Butler visits the category of sex as she raises the question of gender performativity (which in the case of Bill's character is his negative portrayal of a criminal "man" confused with "his" gender trying to conform to heterosexual norms, a fact that leads to the reiteration of homophobic discourse in "real life") in the relation to the materiality of the body. For Butler the performative acts are "forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power (225)". She believes that sexual differences should not simply be perceived in light of the materiality of our bodies (sexes) as she assumes that sex is "not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the 'one' becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (2). Therefore, the necessity of this reiteration "is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply the norms by which their materialization is impelled." (2)

If sex is not a static description and it does not consist as a direct via for what its materialization is impelled, thus sex desire cannot also be perceived as immutable. This fluidity of sex has its reflection in the experience of desire even if it is illegible to the heterosexual matrix's conceiving a norm. Therefore, sexuality is also a reiteration of regulatory norms impelled by a hegemonic force. Since this hegemonic discourse operates in order to produce homophobia or gender unbalance, then what is the location of sexuality in same-sex desire whose practices are regulated by a norm culturally accepted and reproduced by dominant homophobic and hate discourse?

For Judith Halberstam the character of Bill has gender fluidity, but more than that, he is part of posthuman gender. To explain that, she cites the character of Hannibal Lecter when he says that Bill “hates identity, he is simply at odds with any identity whatsoever; no body, no gender will do and so he has to sit at home with his skins and fashion”. Therefore for Halberstam, “what he constructs is a posthuman gender, a gender beyond the body, beyond the human, and a veritable carnage of identity” (175). By stating that, the author presents a non fixed place for Bill’s identity. He is neither the supposed heterosexual orientation demanded by society nor the “deviant” interpretation of the biological sex, Bill transgresses all boundaries. He is constructing a new skin by removing it by their victims and this skin, as he believes, will give him a new life (as she desires to become a woman).

Thus, gender relations in *The Silence of the Lambs* show that Lecter has the power of the phallus; even though he is in jail, he seems to have the capacity to control both Clarice and Bill. Without Lecter, Clarice cannot solve the case as he is the only one who is able to have the murderer’s profile. In addition, Bill seems to be in control as he is said to be a violent and dangerous murderer. However, his characterization in the film makes him a victim who eventually commits his crimes in order to achieve his new sexed body and then personal fulfillment. He apparently believes that by killing all those women he could become one of them by sewing their skin and making beautiful clothes of them. The patriarchal power (the power of the phallus) of Lecter is confirmed until the end of the narrative: after having managed to escape prison he calls Clarice and says: “I don’t want to see you because the world is better with you”(referring to his practice of eating human flesh). Clarice is objectified in the sense that she is never free, even though she killed Bill, after a ruthless fight with her aggressor (the sequence portrays Clarice as the dominant part in the duel, she has a gun and is very well trained cadent of the FBI academy. But, in fact, she is terrified (Would a male FBI agent represented as terrified?) for being face to face with Buffalo Bill. This fact is corroborated by her facial expression in repeated moments throughout the scene. Moreover, Clarice’s terror is being pleasurably being watched by Bill (through his night vision binocular). The narrative conveys the idea that because Clarice is a woman she is not able to defeat a dangerous killer like Bill. She is the woman the town marshals denied to have as a superior and the final scene reiterated her “frailty” as this disempowered female figure.



Figure 17: Clarice’s facial expression conveys her frailty expected to belong to the female gender

Thus, Clarice is a final girl as she suffers during all narrative due to her incapacity of subduing the monster. In their first meeting, Clarice tries to convince Lecter she is able to do her job very well by trying to play with him a psychological game. However, she is defeated by Lecter’s expertise in identifying people’s flaws, as he describes her as “a Southern, poor girl with cheap shoes”. Hence, let us recall Carol Clover’s theory on the final girl trope in *Men, Women and Chainsaws*. For Clover, the final girl is the lone survivor who endeavors in the narrative after having gone through a process of transformation. However, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, it is not only Clarice who seeks transformation (the sign of the cocoon bug of a moth⁷² represents Bill’s transformation as a “woman”).

Back to Bill’s portrayal, it is also relevant to investigate his characterization drawing on queer terms. In order to problematize such concept, I bring into discussion the term queer itself, which has been used in the past to express the abnormal, the “faggot”, or the deviant. However, through time, the negative connotation of the term has been

⁷² The moth is an insect like a butterfly which usually flies during the night. In the film, Bill’s transformation is analogous to the bug’s transformation since the cocoon eventually becomes a flying insect.

shifted to convey the “non categorization” of the subject; a non fixed place in sexual identity. Thus, according to Judith Butler, it

emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, within performativity. The term “queer” has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names, or rather, the producing of a subject through that shaming interpellation. “Queer” derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, and insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time (226).

Moreover, a queer subjectivity (I prefer here the term subjectivity rather than identity as it encapsulates flexibility, variability and experience) expresses the premise that there is no place for a fixed materiality of the body in relation to desire. Eve Sedgwick, in her work *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), illustrates the fluidity of sexual identities as she poses that desire “subsists in the current that turns between one male self and one female self, in whatever sex of the bodies these selves may be manifested.” (87) Such arguments relates to the one presented by Butler, which states that sex and gender are both social/cultural constructions and so are sex and desire.

Thus, considering the aforementioned arguments, one can say that Buffalo Bill’s queer identity has a negative connotation in the film. Bill is portrayed as having a deviant sexuality and it is extremely associated to the idea of violence and excess.

However, an important aspect is that of transformation: an excerpt from the novel illustrates it: “A caterpillar becomes a pupa in a chrysalis. Then it emerges; comes out its secret changing room as the beautiful imago. Do you know what the imago is, Clarice? An adult winged insect. But what else? She shook her head. “It’s a term from the dead religion of psychoanalysis. An imago is an image of the parent buried in the unconscious from infancy and bound with infantile affect.” (Harris, p.163). In this conversation, which is present in both the film and the novel, Lecter describes the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly (Chrysallis), which is found inside the throat of one of Bill’s victims. The moth (the bug cocoon) is a prop that conveys Bill’s new skin: “his” transformation into a “woman”.

From this perspective, one can say that the film and likely the novel portray Buffalo Bill in a problematic manner. Although such representations are different, they both seek to find an explanation to Bill's brutal murders: in the book what is more prominent is a psychological state, while in the film what calls the attention the most is his negative queer characterization connected to his excessive violence (and new skin). Both semiotic modes seem to reinforce compulsory heterosexuality in the sense that the audience would never identify with such gross characterization. The gaze, the curiosity in seeing such violent and excessive figure lies in the grounds of pleasure as William's state that audiences have pleasure watching violence as the female bodies are the ones being mutilated. However, can we think of new possibilities for the gaze as Bill's characterization transcends the male positioning and the pleasure of objectifying female figures?

Finally, the character of Clarice Sterling lacks in narrative innovation regarding her possibility of acting a progressive final girl. Hence, the character of Hannibal Lecter (even though being deviant) is still the one dictating the rules and therefore functioning as a patriarchal figure as he has power over both Clarice and Bill. Clarice might be the film's heroine, but she is only alive because Lecter is courteous and "thinks the world is better with her"- says the psychiatrist in the end of the film. Clarice's trajectory is surely marked by her gender subversion of being able to, most of the times, overpower male supremacy, though her characterization does not entirely fulfill the practice of female's empowerment without male intervention.

CHAPTER V

FINAL REMARKS

Much has been written and said about the representation of women in media. A variety of scholars, theorists, critics and reviewers, from multidisciplinary areas, namely film studies, gender studies, feminist studies, queer studies, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, anthropology, philosophy and history have been debating on the issues of women's representation.

I shall now refer to the main works that composed my theoretical framework throughout my doctoral dissertation, namely Betty Friedan, Laura Mulvey, Judith Butler, Carol Clover, Stuart Hall, Vera Dika, among others.

First, I would like to recall the work of Betty Friedan (1963), of paramount importance for feminist studies as it highlights the position of women's inferiority during the cultural, social and political period of the post world war II. According to Friedan, women's subjectivity is limited to the imposition of their gender. Women could not go beyond that limits, if so, they would be socially, culturally and politically displaced. However the *problem that has no name* pointed out by Friedan lies on the ground of women's incapacity to act subjectively in society. The discussion provided by Friedan is certainly not a new issue on the history of feminist agenda (and Friedan's ideas have not included a broader group of ethnical and social class of women). However, her work is still relevant to think the ways women have been oppressed by being deprived from their intellectual abilities to serve as objects of male supremacy.

Moreover, the revolutionary works of the feminist film critic Laura Mulvey (1973, 1981, 2006) represented a mark in feminist film studies. As I tried to demonstrate throughout this dissertation, Mulvey used psychoanalytical theory as a "political weapon" to unveil the patriarchal system operated in narrative cinema in order to contest the visual pleasure (the male gaze, as a position) which objectifies women on the cinematic apparatus linked to the viewer and the events on the screen.

The work of Chris Weedon (1993) was also fundamental to illuminate the arguments of Freud and Lacan on female subjectivity. Besides that, Weedon presents a debate on Freud and Lacan's ideas as

well as she counterpoints the so-called misogynist discourse presented in the composition of their theories regarding women.

Finally, the work of Judith Butler (1993) on the categories of gender, sex and sexuality discusses the three categories of our subjectivity and how their investigation, mainly regarding the aspect of the fluidity of these threefold instances (gender, sex and sexuality) can promote social change when analyzed more carefully.

In **Chapter I** of this doctoral dissertation I aimed at reviewing, mainly based on Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytical theory, how I would use her "political weapon" to discuss female figures in the low genre of horror (Williams, 1993), more specifically its (sub) genre slasher, namely the films *Halloween*(1978) and *The Silence of the Lambs*(1991). To do so, along the words of Mulvey, I attempted to present key aspects of the aforementioned theorists in order to contextualize the place of woman in theory and history.

By doing that, I moved, in **Chapter II**, to the work of representation which is the core to my study. The arguments of Stuart Hall (1973, 1997) based first on the studies of Ferdinand de Saussure on the triad (sign, reference and referent) as social elements associated to language in order to produce meaning. Second, he investigates new possibilities to think about the meaning as cultural texts dissociated from the fixity of three elements proposed for Saussure (for instance, the ideas of *Deconstruction* in Derrida's works). Hall's ideas illuminated my investigation in order to link the figures I aimed at analyzing in this study, namely the final girl and the monster in slasher films.

To refer to slasher films and the figures of the final girl and the (male) aggressor/monster I selected the extremely influential work of Carol Clover in *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989). Clover's arguments recall psychoanalytical terms of oedipal complex fear of castration, phallus and male identification to build the argument of the final girl. The final girl, according to Clover, is the sole survivor of the attacks of a predominantly male monster whose main motivation for his murders is overtly sexual(he has either been traumatized by any childhood event or it is linked to sexual repression as Leatherface in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or Michael Myers, in *Halloween*). Clover refers to a variety of slasher films, (such as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 1974, *Jaws*, 1975, and *Carrie*, 1977) in order to compose her arguments, including *Halloween*, which is one of the films selected for my analysis. Clover also suggests that the final girl is progressive as her characterization evolves throughout the narrative. The main reason the almost virginal, clever and level-headed woman survives is because she

becomes androgynous in the end of the narrative due to the fact she has gender fluidity (and so does the viewer). We first identify with the male monster (our gaze is in a male position), but we switch to identify with the sole survivor in the end of the narrative due to the fact she turns out to be an aggressive woman making use of phallic objects such as long knives, machetes, among others. Clover's two citations illustrate the aforementioned ideas which have been presented throughout my dissertation. The author believes that,

the one character of stature who does live to tell the tale is of course female. The Final Girl is introduced at the beginning and is the only character to be developed in any psychological detail. We understand immediately from the attention paid it that hers is the main story line. She is intelligent, watchful, level-headed; the first character to sense something amiss and the only one to deduce from the accumulating evidence the patterns and extent of the threat; the only one, in other words, whose perspective approaches our own privileged understanding of the situation. We register her horror as she stumbles on the corpses of her friends; her paralysis in the face of death duplicates those moments of the universal nightmare experience on which horror frankly trades. When she downs the killer, we are triumphant. She is by any measure the slasher film's hero is not to say that our attachment to her is exclusive and unremitting, only that it adds up, and that in the closing sequence it is very close to absolute. (107).

It is thus clear that Clover's arguments are based on the fact that the final girl is progressive due to her masculinization in the end of the narrative. However, in this dissertation, I try to identify a problem here: the phallic appropriation of the final girl positions her in a fluidity of gender that associates her to the male gender. This is to say that the final girl can only be saved due to her so-called maleness, instead of the fact she becomes empowered because she acquires female agency.

In Chapter III, I investigate the film *Halloween* in light of feminist and gender film theory and how cinematic tools contribute to

convey a certain sort of representation of female figures and its association with the viewers. I start by analyzing the opening scene which is the one who delimitates the gender associations between the monster and the female characters that permeates the entire narrative. Judith is an adolescent who, after having sex with her boyfriend, is cruelly stabbed by death by her six years old brother Michael Myers. We are invited by cinematic tools (the recurrent tool in horror films that of the point of view camera (POV) in which allows the viewer to see through the killer's eyes; the props (they are the elements that convey a particular meaning in the scene, such as the knife Michael uses to kill her sister (standing for the penis), the candlesticks placed on the table (to refer to gothic elements used in old haunted castles); the editing, especially in this particular scene which is a long-take approximately of six minutes embodying the terror the scene aims at depicting and finally the *mise-en-scène*, which is composed by the United statesian suburbia, paradoxically represents in *Halloween* violence in contrast to peace and family moral values. However, the narrative implies that Michael Myers works as a regulator of illicit acts taking place in that family established suburbia. All adolescents who engage in unauthorized sex, use of drugs and other vices die. Children are spared from the attacks of the boogeyman Michael Myers and so is Laurie Strode. Nevertheless, Laurie does not die neither because she appropriates phallic tools nor because she has gender fluidity, but because she is saved by male intervention (Doctor Loomis shoots Michael Myers in the end of the narrative).

Thus, Clover's arguments are relevant to raise questions regarding the processes involving the characters and the viewer, but lack on textual analysis, cultural and historical contextualization. An example of that is her major suggestion on the empowerment of the final girl Stretch in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre II* (1986). Stretch, at the end of the film, subdues all the monsters who had imprisoned her in a cave in order to massacre her. However, the final *mise-en-scène* depicts Stretch on the top of rock cave porting the enormous chainsaw which has previously been positioned between her legs in order to kill her (the chainsaw obviously represents penetration in which the chainsaw is a sign for the male organ). In *Halloween*, it is not feasible to conclude that Laurie is a progressive final girl. She suffers for approximately twenty five minutes trying to down Michael Myers who eventually is "killed" by his psychiatrist. Moreover, she symbolizes Michael obsession for the female gender, a fact which might lead to the suggestion of incest (in the opening scene he kills her sister with a long

knife and in another sequence we see the word “sister” written with a knife on his door room). Laurie, Michael’s sister, is since the beginning of the narrative the object of his paranoia, a fact which is clearly conveyed in many scenes (he observes her in class, follows her in the streets and kill all “bad” people who crosses his path while he attempts to find Laurie).

In Chapter IV, I tell another story. At the time of its release, *The Silence of the Lambs* was advertised as a detective psychological film starring, in the leading roles, the very well-known actors such as the awarded actress Jodie Foster (who had her breakthrough in Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver*, 1973) and the acknowledged British stage actor Anthony Hopkins. Such factors clearly contributed for the film’s major success in the box offices. However, if the film is analyzed more carefully, its characteristics associated to the slasher film become prominent. First of all, the film deals with the plain psychology⁷³ it represents related to issues of monstrosity and sexuality (both in the characters of Buffalo Bill and Hannibal Lecter). Secondly, the mise-en-scène mainly represents the patriarchal supremacy, and finally *The Silence of the Lambs* seems to depict the figure of the final girl in the character of Clarice Starling. She is, like all final girls, clever, careful, yet not progressive as suggested by Clover in *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1989).

According to the film producers, *The Silence of the Lambs* is “a feminist piece.”⁷⁴ However, the idea of having a woman as the film heroine is evidently not enough to acknowledge the film as a representative of the empowerment of a female character. On the contrary, Clarice is a tormented woman, mainly by childhood trauma, and eventually finds herself trapped in a net controlled by male subjects. First, she feels constantly threatened by her FBI superior who treats her as a bait to turn Lecter’s on in order to obtain valuable information about crimes. Moreover, her final confrontation with the human monster serial killer Buffalo Bill is a typical trope of slasher films. She is an agonized woman who needs to go through a process of suffering in order to subdue the monster. She runs, gets hurt, wander in the dark (while he gazes at her with his binocular night device), to finally kill him. Clarice is then awarded with honor for best FBI agent due to her

⁷³The “psychologism” used in *The Silence of the Lambs* seems to be merely appropriated for luring the audience

⁷⁴ According to the film producer in an interview for the documentary “Inside the Labyrinth” featured on the film DVD.

accomplishment regarding Bill. However, two points need to be raised: First, Clarice went through a process of the development of her intelligence as well as violence, but both were triggered by the quid pro quo suggested by Lecter. It was thus Lecter who found Bill not Clarice. Second, Clarice survives, she is the final girl, yet not because she defeated Bill, but because Lecter wants her to be alive: "The world is better with you"-says Lecter in the very final scene of the film.

Thus, I conclude that both final girls Laurie and Clarice Starling lack innovation regarding their inaptitude of progressiveness. They are though surrounded by male intervention which stands for women's inability to be the agents both in discourse and social practices. The cinematic apparatus is largely responsible for the propagation of problematic representations of female figures on the screen. The (male) visual pleasure the theorist Laura Mulvey identified about forty years ago still seems to be the most terrified monster women need to fight.

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“On the Perils of Living Dangerously in the Slasher Horror Film: Gender Differences in the Association Between Sexual Activity and Survival” Gender Violence against women Slasher horror films Media portrayals of victims. Content analysis

APPENDIX I

Technical Information: *Halloween*

1978

91min- Horror

Director:

John Carpenter

Writers:

John Carpenter and Debra Hill

Stars:

Donald Pleasence, Jamie Lee Curtis, Tony Moran

Cast (in credits order)

Donald Pleasence... Dr. Sam Loomis

Jamie Lee Curtis... Laurie Strode

Nancy Kyes ... Annie Brackett (as Nancy Loomis)

P.J. Soles ... Lynda van der Klok

Charles Cyphers ... Sheriff Leigh Brackett

Kyle Richards Lindsey Wallace

Brian Andrews ... Tommy Doyle

John Michael Graham ... Bob Simms

Nancy Stephens... Marion Chambers

Arthur Malet ..Graveyard Keeper

Mickey Yablans ..Richie

Brent Le Page... Lonnie Elamb

Adam Hollander ...Keith

Robert Phalen...Dr. Terence Wynn

Tony Moran...Michael Myers (age 23)

Will Sandin ...Michael Myers (age 6)

Sandy Johnson ...Judith Margaret Myers

David Kyle... Judith's Boyfriend

Peter Griffith ...Morgan Strode

Nick Castle ...The Shape

Produced by

Debra Hill ... producer

Kool Marder ... associate producer (as Kool Lusby)

Irwin Yablans ... executive producer

Moustapha Akkad ... executive producer (uncredited)

John Carpenter ... producer (uncredited)

Music by

John Carpenter
 Cinematography by
 Dean Cundey ... director of photography
 Film Editing by
 Charles Bornstein
 Tommy Lee Wallace ... (as Tommy Wallace)
 Production Design by
 Tommy Lee Wallace ... (as Tommy Wallace)

Set Decoration by
 Craig Stearns
 Makeup Department
 Erica Ueland ... makeup artist (as Erica Ulland)
 Production Management
 Don Behrns ... production manager
 Second Unit Director or Assistant Director
 Jack De Wolf ... second assistant director
 Rick Wallace ... assistant director
 Art Department
 Dick Girod ... set painter (as Richard Girod)
 Randy Moore ... assistant art director
 Craig Stearns ... property master
 Sound Department
 Joseph F. Brennan ... boom operator (as Joe Brennan)
 Thomas Causey ... sound mixer (as Tommy Causey)
 William L. Stevenson ... supervising sound editor (as William
 Stevenson)

Tex Rudloff ... sound re-recording mixer (uncredited)
 Lee Strosnider ... sound mixer (uncredited)
 Special Effects by
 Conrad Rothmann ... special effects (uncredited)
 Stunts
 James Winburn ... stunts (as Jim Windburn)
 Camera and Electrical Department
 Reid Freeman ... electrician (as Reed Freeman)
 Kim Gottlieb ... still photographer
 Walt Hill ... grip
 Steve Mathis ... best boy
 Josh Miller ... best boy
 Krishna Rao ... second assistant camera
 Dylan Shephard ... key grip (as Dylan Shepard)

Raymond Stella ... camera operator (as Ray Stella) / panaglide
operator (as Ray Stella)

Fred Vickter ... assistant camera (as Fred Victor)

Mark Walthour ... gaffer

Douglas Olivares ... assistant camera (uncredited)

Costume and Wardrobe Department

Beth Rodgers ... wardrobe

Joan Joseff ... costume jeweller (uncredited)

Music Department

Peter Bergren ... music mixer / music recordist

Bob Walters ... music coordinator

Dan Wyman ... orchestrator

Other crew

Barry Bernardi ... production assistant

Paul Fox ... production assistant

Louise Jaffe ... script supervisor

(http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077651/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm >)

APPENDIX II

Technical Information: *The Silence of the Lambs*

118 min - Crime Drama Thriller

Director:

Jonathan Demme

Writers:

Thomas Harris (novel), Ted Tally (screenplay)

Stars:

Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins, Lawrence A. Bonney

Cast (in credits order) verified as complete

Jodie Foster Clarice Starling

Lawrence A. Bonney FBI Instructor

Kasi Lemmons Ardelia Mapp

Lawrence T. Wrentz Agent Burroughs

Scott Glenn Jack Crawford

Anthony Heald Dr. Frederick Chilton

Frankie Faison Barney

Don Brockett Friendly Psychopath

Frank Seals Jr. Brooding Psychopath

Stuart Rudin Miggs

Anthony Hopkins Dr. Hannibal Lecter

Maria Skorobogatov Young Clarice (as Masha Skorobogatov)

Jeffrie Lane Clarice's Father

Leib Lensky Mr. Lang

George 'Red' Schwartz Mr. Lang's Driver (as Red Schwartz)

Jim Roche TV Evangelist

Brooke Smith Catherine Martin

Ted Levine Jame Gumb

James B. Howard Boxing Instructor

Bill Miller Mr. Brigham

Chuck Aber Agent Terry

Gene Borkan Oscar

Pat McNamara Sheriff Perkins

Tracey Walter Lamar

Kenneth Utt Dr. Akin

Dan Butler Roden

Paul Lazar Pilcher

Darla 'Precious' (as 'Darla')

Adelle Lutz TV Anchor Woman
 Obba Babatundé TV Anchor Man (as Obba Babatunde)
 George Michael TV Sportscaster
 Diane Baker Senator Ruth Martin
 Roger Corman FBI Director Hayden Burke
 Ron Vawter Paul Krendler
 Charles Napier Lt. Boyle
 Jim Dratfield Sen. Martin's Aide
 D. Stanton Miranda 1st Reporter (as Stanton-Miranda)
 Rebecca Saxon 2nd Reporter
 Danny Darst Sgt. Tate
 Cynthia Ettinger Officer Jacobs
 Brent Hinkley Officer Murray
 Steve Wyatt Airport Flirt
 Alex Coleman Sgt. Pembry
 David Early Spooked Memphis Cop
 Andre B. Blake Tall Memphis Cop (as Andre Blake)
 Bill Dalzell Distraught Memphis Cop (as Bill Dalzell III)
 Chris Isaak SWAT Commander
 Daniel von Barga SWAT Communicator
 Tommy LaFitte SWAT Shooter (as Tommy LaFitte)
 Josh Broder EMS Attendant
 Buzz Kilman EMS Driver
 Harry Northup Mr. Bimmel
 Lauren Roselli Stacy Hubka
 Lamont Arnold Flower Delivery Man
 Rest of cast listed alphabetically:
 John Hall State Trooper (uncredited)
 John W. Iwanonkiw

Orderly (uncredited)
 Lynette Jenkins Nurse (uncredited)
 Chris McGinn Autopsy Victim (uncredited)
 Ted Monte FBI Agent (uncredited)
 George A. Romero FBI Agent in Memphis (uncredited)
 Mike Schaeffer Prison Guard (uncredited)
 Produced by
 Grace Blake ... associate producer
 Ronald M. Bozman ... producer (as Ron Bozman)
 Gary Goetzman ... executive producer
 Edward Saxon ... producer

Kenneth Utt ... producer
 Music by
 Howard Shore ... (music by)
 Cinematography by
 Tak Fujimoto ... director of photography
 Film Editing by
 Craig McKay ... (edited by)
 Casting By
 Howard Feuer
 Production Design by
 Kristi Zea
 Art Direction by
 Tim Galvin
 Set Decoration by
 Karen O'Hara
 Costume Design by
 Colleen Atwood
 Makeup Department
 Alan D'Angerio ... hair styles designer
 Carl Fullerton ... special makeup effects creator
 Neal Martz ... special makeup effects creator
 Allen Weisinger ... makeup creator
 Todd Kleitsch ... special effects makeup lab assistant
 (uncredited)

Production Management

Marshall Persinger ... post-production supervisor
 Kenneth Utt ... unit production manager
 Second Unit Director or Assistant Director
 Ronald M. Bozman ... first assistant director (as Ron

Bozman)

Gina Leonetti ... second second assistant director
 Kyle McCarthy ... second assistant director
 Steve Rose ... additional first assistant director
 Art Department
 Francine Byrne ... art department coordinator
 Sean Foyle ... assistant props
 Eileen Garrigan ... master scenic artist
 Frederika Gray ... key scenic artist
 Kalina Ivanov ... storyboard artist
 C.A. Kelly ... stand-by dresser
 Gary Kosko ... assistant art director

	Loren Levy	...	assistant props
	Ed Lohrer III	...	set dresser
	Ann Miller	...	property master
	Paula Payne	...	stand-by scenic artist
	Karl Shefelman	...	storyboard artist
	Diana Stoughton	...	assistant set decorator (as
Diana L. Stoughton)			
	Kenneth Turek	...	set dresser (as Ken Turek)
	Edward West	...	set dresser
	Natalie Wilson	...	assistant art director
	S. Bruce Wineinger	...	construction coordinator
	Vincent Borrelli	...	scenic artist (uncredited)
	Chris Call	...	painter (uncredited)
	Thomas J. Garrigan	...	props (uncredited)
	Smith Harper Hutchings	...	scenic artist (uncredited)
	Brick Mason	...	storyboard artist (uncredited)
	Kimberly Weeks	...	buyer (uncredited)
	Sound Department		
	Ron Bochar	...	fx editor
	David Boulton	...	a.d.r. recordist
	Missy Cohen	...	apprentice sound editor
	Randall Coleman	...	assistant a.d.r. editor
	Marko A. Costanzo	...	foley artist (as Marko
Costanzo)			
	Kay Denmark	...	a.d.r. boom operator
	William Docker	...	apprentice sound editor (as Bill
Docker)			
	Tom Fleischman	...	re-recording mixer
	John Fundus	...	sound recordist
	Brian Johnson	...	assistant sound editor
	Frank Kern	...	foley editor
	Stuart Levy	...	apprentice sound editor
	Skip Lievsay	...	sound designer
	Marissa Littlefield	...	dialogue editor
	Dennis Maitland II	...	boom operator
	Douglas Murray	...	re-recordist (as Douglas L.
Murray)			
	Christopher Newman	...	production sound mixer
	Bruce Pross	...	foley editor
	Fred Rosenberg	...	dialogue editor
	Anne Sawyer	...	assistant sound editor

Gail Showalter ...	a.d.r. editor
Alan Snelling ...	recording engineer
Sean Squires ...	re-recorder
Jeffrey Stern ...	dialogue editor
Philip Stockton ...	dialogue editor (as Phil Stockton)
Steven Visscher ...	foley editor
Deborah Wallach ...	a.d.r. editor
Robert F. Warren ...	dolby stereo consultant
Shari Johanson ...	apprentice sound editor (uncredited)
Special Effects by	
Dwight Benjamin-Creel ...	special effects
Stunts	
Michael Cassidy ...	stuntman (as Mike Cassidy)
Walter Robles ...	stuntman (as Walt Robles)
John Robotham ...	stunt coordinator
George P. Wilbur ...	stuntman (as George Wilbur)
Camera and Electrical Department	
Richard Aversa ...	grip
Michael Burke ...	electrician (as Mike Burke)
Ken Connors ...	best boy electric (as Kenny Connors)
Ed DeCort ...	electrician
Peter Demme ...	electrician
John Donohue ...	dolly grip
Russell Engels ...	gaffer (as Rusty Engels)
Larry Huston ...	additional camera assistant
Tony C. Jannelli ...	camera operator (as Tony Jannelli)
Roswell Jones ...	electrician
Jay Levy ...	additional camera assistant
Mick Lohrer ...	grip
Bruce MacCallum ...	first assistant camera
Larry McConkey ...	steadicam operator
Billy Miller ...	key grip (as Bill Miller)
Matt Miller ...	grip
Tom O'Halloran ...	second assistant camera
Brian S. Osmond ...	camera trainee (as Brian Osmond)
James Petri ...	electrician
Calvin Price ...	grip
Ken Regan ...	still photographer
Howard Weiner ...	video engineer

David Knox	...	Steadicam operator (uncredited)
Mark Streapy	...	aerial camera operator (uncredited)
Casting Department		
Donna M. Belajac	...	additional casting: Pittsburgh
(as Donna Belajac)		
Staci A. Blagovich	...	extras casting: Pittsburgh (as
Staci Blagovich)		
Costume and Wardrobe Department		
Mark Burchard	...	wardrobe supervisor
Kathleen Gerlach	...	assistant costume designer
Hartsell Taylor	...	wardrobe supervisor
Benjamin Wilson	...	wardrobe assistant
Editorial Department		
Trish Breganti	...	post-production assistant
Lisa Bromwell	...	associate editor
Sam Bruskin	...	post-production assistant
Lynn Cassaniti	...	apprentice film editor
Nzingha Clarke	...	apprentice film editor
Priscilla Fleischman	...	post-production assistant
David Kirkman	...	apprentice film editor
David Orr	...	color timer
Colleen Sharp	...	first assistant editor
Alice Stone	...	second assistant editor
Music Department		
Sharon Boyle	...	music supervisor
Susan Demskey-Horiuchi	...	assistant music editor
(as Sue Demskey)		
Homer Denison	...	orchestrator
Suzana Peric	...	music editor
Nic Ratner	...	assistant music editor
Peter Fuchs	...	assistant music recording engineer
(uncredited)		
Quincy Z. Gunderson	...	assistant music editor
(uncredited)		
Natasha Kinne	...	playback singer (uncredited)
Dana Sano	...	music coordinator (uncredited)

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